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**THE ARCHAIC MAKES THE AVANT-GARDE.**

**EXPERIMENTAL PRACTICE AND PRIMORDIAL IMAGE.**

**READING THE BRAZILIAN POST-NEOCONCRETE**

**AND THE JAPANESE GUTAI ARTISTS**

**THROUGH MIRCEA ELIADE AND CARL GUSTAV JUNG.**

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## ABSTRACT

THE ARCHAIC MAKES THE AVANT-GARDE.

EXPERIMENTAL PRACTICE AND PRIMORDIAL IMAGE.

READING THE BRAZILIAN POST-NEOCONCRETE AND THE JAPANESE GUTAI  
ARTISTS THROUGH MIRCEA ELIADE AND CARL GUSTAV JUNG.

The Archaic Makes the Avant-Garde, Experimental Practice and Primordial Image is a research on the work, practice and creative process of the Brazilian Post-Neoconcrete artists Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, and of the Japanese Gutai group. These artists adopted a concrete ludic relationship between the body and the material; their empirical processes preceded and dispensed theoretical consideration. As a result, their practice and work substantiated a very primal bond between artist, matter and creative drive, through which they cumulatively experienced the creative potency, exerted the creative command, and re-enacted the original creation. Having dismissed content in the work of art – the conventions of language, meaning, and representation – their imagery consistently placed them in the existential condition of the ‘absolute beginning’.

However, at the cutting edge of artistic production, in the pursuit of a new order of creation, underlying the experimental practices and works of these avant-garde artists, and evinced in recurrent primordial images of the pattern of ‘restoration of the creative time’, rests a universal knowledge, embodied and archaic. It remains largely unconscious, consisting of a psycho-physiological device to surpass consciousness and attain a cosmicized atemporal mode of being – the condition of ‘absolute beginning’ that the avant-garde

extols for creation – and known in ancient practical philosophies as the ascension of the kundaliní energy (libido, orgone, or sexuality are aspects of this energy – thus, a creative, generative principle). This knowledge is constantly brought forward, in inexorable reminders of the ‘teleology of creation’ of that inner program of emancipation.

The analysis of the work and practice of these artists took on from the theory and method of authors Mircea Eliade, Gustav Jung, as well as Nise da Silveira. They acknowledged this psycho-physiological process, verified its correspondence with specific human aspirations or existential situations, figured within dreams, symbols, myths, reveries, insights and plastic artistic creation. And, from this generative and emancipatory attribute of the psyche, they also looked into the purposefulness of the creative accomplishment, which is arguably the ultimate question of this research.



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## INTRODUCTION

The archaic, in whatever form it comes, challenges 'modern man's originality, his newness in comparison with traditional societies', challenges 'his determination to regard himself as a purely historical being', challenges 'his wish to live in a basically desacralized cosmos' (Eliade, 1995, p. ix).

This research started out with the generic aim of looking into the role of the 'body/mind practices' in the creative process and in the work of the Brazilian Post-Neoconcrete artists and the Japanese Gutai artists. As the analysis progressed, these broad concepts gained a more precise outline, as well as the objects of analysis. To the research, the relevant element in the 'body/mind practice' was the experimental engagement of the body, hence the option for the term 'experimental practice'; and the relevant element in the creative process that comprised those practices was the emergence of 'primordial images'. Thus, the research settled with the purpose of approaching the relation between the experimental practice with the body and the resulting emergence of primordial images.

The works and the periods that prompted this analysis came forth with the overview of the work of these artists and their respective contexts, in the attempt at grasping the deeper motivations of their creative endeavour. As recently as 2004, more than thirty years after their most crucial realizations, in the anthological tome *Art Since 1900* (Krauss et al., 2004, pp. 373-378), the Brazilian Neoconcrete artists and the Gutai artists are addressed simultaneously,

yet 'posited as evidence of the international ripple effects of Euro-American modernism' (Tiampo, 2007, p. 705). Given their *sui generis* character, placing them in any categorized trend might prove impossible and, while the number of reasons to pair them in a reflection was high and promising, their blinkered presentation on a publication of worldwide distribution, indicated that, at least for the mainstream, their work would remain largely misunderstood.

In this research, the works under analysis in the cases of Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark drift away from the acknowledged frame of the Neoconcretism<sup>1</sup> and share a core, the 'immanence of the act'<sup>2</sup>, that implies an exploratory presence of the body<sup>3</sup>, which would arguably justify their further designation as Post-Neoconcretist works<sup>4</sup>: Hélio Oiticica's environmental experiment, particularly from the *Parangolé* (*Parangole*) to *Éden* (*Eden*), and Lygia Clark's research with the body, from the *Nostalgia do Corpo* (*Longing for the Body*) to the *Estruturação do Self* (*Structuring of the Self*). While these works claimed from the artists the issuing of written material as a complementary way to communicate the ground

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<sup>1</sup> As it was endorsed by Ferreira Gullar, artist and prominent theoretician of the Neoconcretism: based upon the work and thought of Merleau-Ponty, Vladimir Tatlin, Kasimir Malevitch, Piet Mondrian, Joseph Albers, or Max Bill.

<sup>2</sup> The 'immanence of the act' is referred by both artists as a core notion for their pivotal works in the shift from the object to the event: for Clark, in the *Bichos* (*Animals*), 1960-63 and in *Caminhando*, 1963 (*Walking*) (Clark, 1997, p. 152, 187) and, for Oiticica, in the *Parangolé* experiment (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 74), and the 'dance in his experience' at the Mangueira slum.

<sup>3</sup> Lygia Clark, Paris, 1968: 'In all I do there is really the need of the human body expressing itself, or to unravel it as if it was a primal experience'; in the original version: 'Em tudo o que faço há realmente necessidade do corpo humano que se expressa, ou para revelá-lo como se fosse uma experiência primeira' (Figueiredo, 1996, p. 61).

<sup>4</sup> A designation I adopt, along with Michael Asbury: 'Gullar has stated that Oiticica considered him as an older brother, and that his respect for the poet was confirmed by the artist's insistence in constructing Gullar's 'Buried Poem' in his family's back garden. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Gullar's disengagement from neoconcretism must have caused a turmoil in the young artist's mind. Again, Gullar has exemplified this fact by referring to the artist's impasse when the poet, having abandoned his faith in the 'possibility of a Brazilian avant-garde' suggested that all of the neoconcrete production should be destroyed during a final exhibition. If we are to consider that Oiticica's reference to Gullar in his 1967 essay *Esquema Geral da Nova Objetividade* (*General Scheme of the New Objectivity*) is indicative of the artist's enduring respect for the poet - despite the poet's critical position with regard to contemporary art production, including Oiticica's own post-neoconcrete production - then it could be assumed that Oiticica's shift was in part a response to Gullar's implicit ultimatum: in order to be ethical one needs to turn to politics, the avant-garde cannot be politically engaged due to the autonomous nature of its enquiry' (Braga, 2008, p. 57).

of their practice (Clark, 1997, p. 276)<sup>5</sup>, with statements in different formats (texts, letters, interviews), nevertheless the theoretical formulations or reflections derived from their creative practice or, in the case of Lygia Clark, also from insights of her inner psychic depths that resonated throughout her creative process. Their work reached increasing international attention from the 1990s onwards, culminating, in the case of Hélio Oiticica, with the acquisition by the Tate Modern of several of his works, including an edition of (*Tropicália*) *Tropicalia*. Hélio Oiticica's premature death in 1980, when he was only 43 years old, interrupted his creative research at the stage of the *Contra-Bólides* (*Counter-Bolides*), in the *Urban Poetic Happenings Nr. 1* and *Nr. 2*, respectively with the *Contra-Bólido Nr.1* (*Counter-Bolide Nr. 1*) at the Caju landfill, and the *Contra-Bólido Nr.2* at the Mangueira hill. Lygia Clark, in turn, carried out her creative research to its last consequences, eventually keeping the 'therapeutic setting'<sup>6</sup> of the *Estruturação do Self* as its overall outcome, on what might be wrongly assumed as a withdrawal from artistic practice. In both cases, their artistic statement remained uncompromising.

Likewise, the primacy of practice over theory seems to be a matter of principle in the Gutai group, with the group's central aim at 'bringing life to matter'<sup>7</sup> attained by the implication of the body for a creative outcome, and with the overt and unabashed disregard for discursive reasoning in what concerned content in the work of art. Also partly because of Yoshihara's visionary initiative

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<sup>5</sup> The importance of a measure of 'communication', implied in the creative event, is asserted by Lygia Clark in regard to the 'propositions' that she had conceived from 1967-68 ('proposições vivenciais', 'living propositions'), and carried further in 1971, during her period of the *Pensamento mudo* (*Mute thought*): '... I went to Holland, to Utrecht, to make the propositions (...) they filmed it all but the communication was a total crap. I returned in a great crisis, because if I don't create anymore and, on top of that, I can't communicate what I've created, that is too much!' (See Chapter I, note 143).

<sup>6</sup> Designation used by Lula Wanderlei in the video-documentary *Lygia Clark. A Memória do Corpo*. (*Lygia Clark. The Memory of the Body*) (1984) directed by Mário Carneiro.

<sup>7</sup> Jiro Yoshihara stated in the Gutai Art Manifest: 'Under the cloak of an intellectual aim, the materials have been completely murdered and can no longer speak to us' (Shoichi, 2004, p. 84).

in finding different exhibition settings, the artistic practices of the group were pioneering not only in the Japanese post-war avant-garde development and throughout the 1960s, but also in the global context of artistic practice, as their acknowledgement by Allan Kaprow in as early as 1966 shows (Kaprow, 1966, p. 211-225)<sup>8</sup>. Thus, the analysis of the Gutai practice was centred in Jiro Yoshihara and his orchestration of the more experimental years of the group, from 1954 to 1958, with particular interest in the work of Kazuo Shiraga, Akira Kanayama, Atsuko Tanaka, Sadamasa Motonaga, Saburo Murakami, Tsuruko Yamasaki, and Yoshihara himself. With the rise of international interest in the work of the Gutai group from the 1980s onwards, and especially throughout the 1990s, their historiography has been gradually established. Nevertheless, still in 2002, Koichi Kawasaki<sup>9</sup>, a frequent curator of Gutai group exhibitions, referred that the activity of the Gutai group was yet to be understood 'in relation to the creative power of human beings' (Kawasaki, 2003, p. 151)<sup>10</sup>.

This thesis aims to bring an understanding of the artistic practice of these two groups of artists 'in relation to the creative power of human beings'. It consists of the research on a pattern of archaic imagery, that of 'absolute beginning', which both groups have in common. This shared pattern of imagery upholds their experimental endeavour as the enactment of a coherent, vital bond between artist, matter, and the accomplishment of the creative drive. It is also evidence of their systematic and uncompromising quest for the new, both in the work of art and in the creative process. The recurrence of archaic imagery of 'absolute beginning' is present in the ultimate iconographic layers of their artwork, as well as in the written record of the rich inner occurrences undergone

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<sup>8</sup> Even if wrongly taking their work as 'happenings'. See Chapter III, note 57.

<sup>9</sup> Koichi Kawasaki is a curator at the Hyogo Prefectural Museum, Kobe, Japan.

<sup>10</sup> Kawasaki, Koichi et al., Oliva, Achile B. ed. (2003) *Art Tribes*. Skira.



throughout the stages of their creative process. The recurrence of archaic imagery of ‘absolute beginning’ reveals that the vital bond (between artist, matter, and the accomplishment of the creative drive) stands for a universal collective set of human aspirations. It also expresses the existential situations that are representative of this set of human aspirations, such as the longing for an unconditioned state, for fulfilment, or unification. Furthermore, it reflects an embodied emancipatory psycho-physiological resource, which is intrinsic to the human generative potential, indeed a creative teleology – namely the ascension of the *kundaliní* energy, that I explain further ahead in this introduction.

Thus, this research contributes with new elements to the reading of the experimental avant-garde enterprise of these artists. In the case of Lygia Clark, three aspects emerged from the analysis of her imagery. The first is the persistence of the image of ‘the full void’, its successive activation at each stage of her work, seemingly expressing the situation of creative accomplishment. The second aspect is the pivotal occurrence of images typical of archaic traditions of ‘initiation of medicine men’ during her psychic crisis in Carboneras (Spain). This imagery preceded and originated the artist’s development of collective experiments with the body. The successive phases of experiments within this development would significantly follow the very pattern of ‘initiation of medicine men’ – dismemberment, reconstruction, and fusion in the collective. This development already bore an ultimate therapeutic purpose, coherently leading to the last of her propositions, the *Estruturação do Self*. The third aspect emerged with the reading of that final proposition as a therapeutic setting, as a set of procedures that enable the reverting of symptoms into symbols. Addressing the impasse of psychic crises, the one-to-one sessions of the *Estruturação do Self* caused, in the patient, the emergence of images that seemingly re-established

psychic parity and, namely, the integration of the feminine principle. In the case of Hélio Oiticica, three aspects also arose from the research. Firstly, the relevance of the 'origin myth', comprising the pattern of images whereby an 'exemplary action' prompts not merely every new creation but specifically 'a new order of creation'. This provided a vision into his set of works *Bólides* (*Bolides*) and *Contra-Bólides* (*Counter-Bolides*). The second aspect relates to the 'tendency towards the concrete' assisting the experimental engagement of the body, an attribute that would mark the use of the *Parangolé* capes and Oiticica's subsequent environmental experiment named 'total *Parangolé*-living. The third aspect relates to the enactment of episodes of 'initiatory death' as the means to attain a reorganization of the sense experience. This feature allows for a greater understanding of the environments Oiticica created for the exploration of behaviour, such as *Tropicália* (*Tropicalia*) and *Éden* (*Eden*). These spaces can thus be regarded as dwellings for carrying out the annihilation of a current mode of being, through the return to the unconditioned and the pursuit of a state of latency. In the case of the Gutai artists, the research brought forward two complementary aspects of Jiro Yoshihara's eagerness for a new aesthetics. The first concentrates, on the one hand, on his contempt for theoretical reasoning and his determination to observe a direct contact with the material, prompting the emerging physicality of the Gutai artists through the choice of innovative exhibition settings. The second, on the other hand, is related to his 'extraordinary intuition'<sup>11</sup> in ensuring the enactment of the vital bond between artist, matter and the accomplishment of the creative drive. This, as I argue, places the Gutai creative enterprise within the tradition that originated the

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<sup>11</sup> Expression that Alfred Pacquement used to entitle his article on the catalogue of the exhibition *Le Japon des Avant-Gardes*, at the Centre George Pompidou, Paris, in 1986.

Japanese performative arts, such as it is described in the traditional literature of the 'origin myth', namely the 'myth of the rock cave' in association with the creation of *Noh*, *kagura* and *waka* (Breen, 2011, pp. 129-167).

The two groups of artists never met. However, the 9th edition of the Tokyo Biennial, in 1967, included a work by Hélio Oiticica, the *Bolide B40-66*, *Appropriation – Box Nr. 3* (fig. 1), and two of Jiro Yoshihara's *White Circles* (fig. 2)<sup>12</sup>. Other than this, they were subjects of the French journal *Robho*<sup>13</sup>, issue 5/6, in 1971, whose director, Jean Clay, was a friend of Lygia Clark. Adding to their common caricatural trait as 'peripheral' (Krauss et al., 2004, pp. 373-378), there are more significant affinities between them. They were painters that shifted into experimental practices, in what Guy Brett called, concerning the Brazilian artists, a 'radical leap' (Ades, 1989). In this, they adopted a concrete ludic engagement between the material and the body, which is paradigmatic, in the case of Clark, on the *Objetos Relacionais* (*Relational Objects*) for the *Estruturação do Self*; in the case of Oiticica, on the *Parangolé* garment; in the case of Kazuo Shiraga, on his *Challenge to the Mud* or his paintings with the feet; or, in the case of Atsuko Tanaka, on her stripping during the Gutai Art Using the Stage. The 'concreteness' of that ludic relation substantiates the continuum of matter and energy between the body and the material, while withdrawing all discursive content from the work of art, that is, the conventions of language, of representation and, ultimately, of meaning. Grasping sense becomes a strictly

<sup>12</sup> Other artists that showed on the 9<sup>th</sup> Tokyo Biennale were Rubens Gerchman, with the painting *Box to live in – Air*, Mauricio Nogueira Lima, with the painting *Aahh!*, and Nelson Leirner. On the catalogue of the exhibition, the critic Ichiro Haryu wrote: 'Unfolding a graceful and erotic fantasy Brazil's Nelson Leirner, while parodying Fontana's paintings and noted sculptures presented a nonchalant "anti-art"' (National Museum of Art of Tokyo, 9<sup>th</sup> Tokyo Biennale, 1967).

<sup>13</sup> *Robho*, nr. 5/6, 1971, edited by Julien Blaine and Jean Clay, with a double title *Enfin du nouveau*, and *Quelques aspects de l'art bourgeois*; in this issue, Jiro Yoshihara writes *Sur L'Art Gutai*, pp. 54-60; the theme *Unité du Champ Perceptif*, pp. 38-43, presents the work of Lygia Clark and Hélio Oiticica, and the theme *Fusion Generalisée*, pp. 12-19, presents works by Lygia Clark with a text by David Medalla, *Participe present. L'art the Lygia Clark*.

experimental issue, any meaning unattainable without the concrete experience lived by means of the body. Finally, they shared the relentless intent of 'creating the new': this pursuit is explicitly stated in Yoshihara's utterance 'Create what has never been done before!' (Tiampo, 2007, p. 689), and is implicit on the view about the art of the 1960s of both Clark and Oiticica, criticising the search for 'originality for the sake of originality' within a 'dead art'<sup>14</sup>.

While the factor of apprehending the sense of the work by means of the body is seemingly an attribute of performance in general, when added to the pursuit of the new, of 'a new order of work of art' (Oiticica, 1993, p. 223), or of 'something in the order of creation', according to Yoshihara (Junji, 1999, p. 171), gains a specificity of intent, a purposefulness, that leads all the experimental effort, in a great economy of means, to a degree of accuracy and a degree of subtlety that completely dismiss catharsis, chaos, chance or arbitrariness, even if, by the nature of an actual event, a measure of imponderability is necessarily involved, or if the physical impetuosity may be suggestive of random violence. For this reason, almost without exception, the 'events' conceived by these artists are thoroughly planned but impossible to rehearse, and are never inhuman. On the contrary, the pathos that they generate aims at a 'suspension of disbelief', a fascination that, ultimately, entails the occurrence of the 'numinous'<sup>15</sup>. Perhaps the first distinctive feature of the 'radical avant-garde', or 'experimental avant-

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<sup>14</sup> Clark: 'the art defended by Restany is a dead art (...) you see in them all a search for originality for originality's sake (...) absolutely a different kind of naturalism of a very bad quality' (Clark, 1998, p. 34); Oiticica: 'the so-called Italian *povera arte* is made with the most advanced means; it is the sublimation of poverty, but in a visual anecdotal way (...) the capitalization of the idea of poverty' (Clark, 1998, p. 54).

<sup>15</sup> I use the term numinous in accordance with Jung: 'the *numinosum* [is] a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will. (...) The *numinosum* – whatever its cause may be – is an experience of the subject independent of his will. (...) The *numinosum* is either a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness (Jung, 1990, p. 489-490); see Chapter I, note 68. It can also be understood as *kami*, the Japanese term to signify the quality of extraordinary possessed by something: 'according to ancient usage whatever seemed strikingly impressive, possessed the quality of excellence, or inspired a feeling of awe was called *kami*' (Harris, 2001, p. 14).

garde'<sup>16</sup>, is the generative power that resides in the pursuit of the new by means of the body, even if mediated by the concrete allure and protean serendipity of matter that is external to the body, as a facilitator of the experience. As a result of this very primal bond between artist, matter and creative drive, converging in the work, these artists expected to cumulatively experience the creative potency, exert the creative command and re-enact the original creation, in a 'mythical pattern' of 'absolute beginning' (Eliade, 1995, p. 60)<sup>17</sup>, which they expressed in cryptic terms such as the 'full-void' in the case of Clark<sup>18</sup> (Clark, 1997, pp. 111-113), the 'total act of being' in the case of Oiticica<sup>19</sup> (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 74), the

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<sup>16</sup> I use the designations 'radical avant-garde' and 'experimental avant-garde' as equivalents. I use the term 'radical' with three senses: 1. to imply the 'radical leap' that Guy Brett referred when synthesizing the shift from painting to exploratory work with the body, a disciplinary rupture and its epistemological implications (Ades, 1989); 2. to express the likely result of the experimental use of the body in the pursuit of the new, an ontological rupture rooted in a psycho-physiological change, in a re-organization of the sense-experience and its epistemological implications; the experimental use of the body, under these circumstances, affects the deeper structures of the 'embodied core consciousness', through the essential bodily systems, homeostatic, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive, suspending the 'extended consciousness' (related with the awareness of the past and the future, and with the ability to master language) and retrieving a 'pre-linguistic core', a 'radical' bodily level (Damásio, 1999) (see Chapter II, note 44); 3. to stress the fact that the experimental use of the body has a concrete character, in the sense that Eliade speaks of a 'tendency to the concrete' (in relation to the practical Hindu philosophy of Yoga), in which the 'experience' is 'based almost entirely on immediate, concrete data, still hardly separated from their physiological substratum' (Eliade, 1990, p. 144), a tendency that '[emphasizes] the necessity for direct experience, for realization, for practice (...) a tendency toward the act, toward experimental verification' (Eliade, 1990, p. 40), which dismisses all speculation, placing the individual in a 'radical' present. These three aspects are not unlike the stance that Clark, Oiticica, or the Gutai took in their creative practice.

<sup>17</sup> Eliade uses the expression 'absolute beginning' to synthesize the array of images that express a 'return to the origin', placing man at 'the creative time', 'the Great Time', participating in a reenactment of 'the original creation' with all that it implies – regeneration and new creation: 'It would be impossible to overstress the tendency – observable in every society, however highly developed – to bring back that time, mythical time, the Great Time. For this bringing back is effected without exception by every rite and every significant act' (Eliade, 1971, p. 395). Eliade further explains the mythical pattern of the 'absolute beginning': 'In the dialectic that made all these homologies possible, we discern the emotion of primitive man discovering the life of the spirit. The newness of the spiritual life, its autonomy, could find no better expression than the images of an "absolute beginning", images whose structure is anthropocosmic, deriving at once from embryology and from cosmogony' (Eliade, 1995, p. 60). See Chapter III, Return to the Origin, 1. The embryo, 2. The merging of all forms.

<sup>18</sup> In the text *O Vazio Pleno* (*The full-void*): '... consciousness of the plenitude of the full-void (inner time) (...) in art, we go in search of the void (from which we came) and, when we find it ascribed with value, we find our inner time'.

<sup>19</sup> In the text *A dança na minha experiência* (*Dance on my experience*): 'What interests me is the "total act of being" that I experience here in me – not partially total acts, but a "total act of life", irreversible, the unbalance for the balance of the being'.

‘unified condition of the spirit and body’ in the case of Shiraga<sup>20</sup> (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 27), or an ‘immutable meaning’ in the case of Kanayama<sup>21</sup> (Tiampo, 2004, p. 106).

The contrast between, on one side, the ‘concreteness’ of the creative process and the artistic work, based in a direct experience of the body and the material and, on the other side, the subjective degree of the statements issued to describe the creative accomplishment is striking – the latter also conveying conspicuous and significant images of unification and absolute permanence, that is, primal intuitions, providing the key for an iconological interpretation<sup>22</sup>. The cryptic character of the ‘existential situations’ (Eliade, 1977, p. 12)<sup>23</sup> described by the artists was, for me, the first indication that, due to the specific combination of factors on their creative endeavour, the imagery that emerged had a primeval character; it unravelled an intrinsic knowledge or information, that was evinced through the concise, plain and powerful arrangements typical of primordial images<sup>24</sup>. Perhaps the second distinctive feature of the ‘radical’ or ‘experimental

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<sup>20</sup> ‘The quality of which I speak here is (...) the unified condition of the spirit and body which is acquired through living and is founded on the body we are born with’.

<sup>21</sup> In the text *About the bell work*: ‘When ideas of painting and sculpture are expanded to the extent that they reveal an unknown dimension, immutable meaning is revealed in anticipation of a new era’.

<sup>22</sup> In the three stages of the iconological methodology exposed in Panofsky’s classical *Meaning in the Visual Arts* he distinguishes iconography from iconology, and considers that the stage of iconological interpretation, the third stage, uses what he calls a ‘synthetic intuition (familiarity with the essential tendencies of the human mind)’. The first stage, that of the primary or natural subject matter, is still a pre-iconographical description, regarding the objective plastic content, the facts and expression making the forms, that he calls the ‘world of artistic motifs’; the second stage, or the ‘secondary or conventional subject matter’, is the iconographical analysis, requiring the knowledge of literary sources to elucidate the ‘world of images, stories and allegories’; and the third stage, that of the iconological interpretation through a ‘synthetic intuition’, into the ‘intrinsic meaning or content’ and the ‘world of the “symbolical” values’, assisted by the ‘history of cultural symptoms or “symbols”’.

<sup>23</sup> The term ‘existential situation’ was borrowed from Mircea Eliade, who uses it to state that the approach to symbols, myths and rites, other than being ‘inseparable from profound dramas enacted in the unconscious’, also regards those images as ‘the privileged expressions of the existential situations of peoples belonging to various types of society’.

<sup>24</sup> The notion of ‘primordial image’ was adopted from Carl Gustav Jung’s analytical psychology: ‘I call the image *primordial* when it possesses an *archaic* character. I speak of its archaic character when the image is in striking accord with familiar mythological motifs. It then expresses material primarily derived from the collective unconscious, and indicates at the same time that the factors

avant-garde' is the recurrence of primordial images, particularly of the pattern of 'absolute beginning', not merely fulfilling the condition that the avant-gardes extol for creation, but building the enigmatic purposefulness and the sheer vitality of the work itself, as I explain further below.

The large theoretical frame devised at the start of this research included authors from the neurosciences, cognitive sciences, psychology, phenomenology, theory of art and of culture, and history of art, aiming at an all-encompassing survey. Yet, it was through Mircea Eliade's vast record and analysis of patterns of images (Eliade, 1971), and their correspondent 'existential situations', that it was possible to identify the more recurrent image in the work of these artists, that of the 'conjunction of the opposites' (or 'union of the polarities'), as well as its correspondent existential situation, that of the 'restoration of the original time' (or 'restoration of the creative time', or simply 'return to the origin'), within the pattern of 'absolute beginning'. This certainly fitted the endeavour of an artistic avant-garde, not only for its fundamental search for the new, but also for the radical means used to attain it: a creative process not merely to create the new but to establish a new order of creation. With Eliade (and also with Jung) I was able to argue that the primordial images and their array of renderings aim at reconnecting – 'religere'<sup>25</sup> – man with the purposefulness of his experience, for

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influencing the conscious situation of the moment are collective rather than personal'. Jung defines a mythological motif as 'a continually effective and recurrent expression that reawakens certain psychic experiences or else formulates them in an appropriate way' (Jung, 1990, p. 263).

<sup>25</sup> Jung and Eliade agree on the role of the archetype concerning what might be acknowledged as the religious attitude: 'religious ideas do not, in psychological reality, rest solely upon tradition and faith, but originate with the archetypes, the "careful consideration" of which – religere – constitutes the essence of religion' (Jung, 1990, p. 93); 'religious life and all the creations that spring from it, are dominated by what one may call 'the tendency toward the archetype' however many and varied are the components that go to make up any religious creation (any divine form, rite, myth or cult) their expression tends constantly to revert to an archetype' (Eliade, 1958, p. 58). An archetype 'can be conceived as a mnemonic deposit, an imprint or engraving, which has arisen through the condensation of countless processes of a similar kind' (Jung, 1990, p. 263).

they establish, empirically and immediately, the coherence between the deeper layers of unconscious knowledge and the awareness of the present.

The analytical psychology of Carl Gustav Jung was essential to explain the process through which this reconnection occurs: his comprehensive conception of psychic energy; the dynamics of the process of individuation, with the archetype as the counterpart of instinct, defining the basic human psychic conflict; the formation of the symbol enabling the parity of the conflicting parts in psyche and the resulting emergence of primordial images. It had become clear that the more significant references to the research acknowledged a certain type of 'existential situation', of relationship between the body, the mind and the environment, and, more importantly, approached empirically a comprehensive concept of psychic energy, directly concerned with the creative drive and, thus, with the purposefulness of the creative accomplishment. Coming across the work of the Brazilian psychiatrist Nise da Silveira<sup>26</sup> was decisive for this research, for I took hold of her method of interpretation, that draws on the iconology of Erwin Panofsky, while understanding the specificities of the creative drive, given that she worked with schizophrenic patients in a therapy based on creative activities. Silveira's verification of an iconographic progression towards more archaic symbols in the artistic production of her patients, and her interpretation of their archetypal imagery, their sequences of primordial images, enabled me to envisage the avant-garde's experimental work and practice as renderings of those concise and plain pre-figurations. Silveira's use of Jung's theory was exemplary for my analysis of the creative process of these artists: it brought my attention to the process of the formation of the symbol according to Jung and its

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<sup>26</sup> Nise da Silveira (b. Maceió, 15 February 1906, d. Rio de Janeiro, 30 October 1999). See Chapter I, note 15. Junguian psychiatrist whose main practice was held at the STOR (Seção de Terapêutica Ocupacional), Section of Occupational Therapy, at the Centro Psiquiátrico Nacional de D. Pedro II (National Psychiatric Centre D. Pedro II), Engenho de Dentro, Rio de Janeiro.



embedding in the process of individuation, from which I departed to characterize the experimental practice as a set of procedures that revert the symptom into a symbol, allowing for the further advancement of the process of individuation.

The use of documental sources, in the case of Hélio Oiticica, was facilitated by the fact that his writings are catalogued and partially available online, and access to his artwork and non-published material is granted by his relatives at the Projeto HO, in Rio de Janeiro. In Lygia Clark's case, the attempts to consult her diary, as well as to have wider access to her clinical notes on the sessions of the *Estruturação do Self* were not successful, although the material that was available provided a sufficient amount of detailed inner imagery to fundament the interpretation I was pursuing. In both cases, I opted to translate any material in quotations that had not been previously translated from the available sources into the English language, placing text in its original Portuguese version in the footnotes. In the case of the Gutai group, most of the available sources, which were in several languages, were surveyed (English, French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese), as well as translations provided in academic theses, such as small fragments of the momentous Jiro Yoshihara's *Autobiography of My Heart*.

However, most of the material from periodicals – in which promising interviews given throughout the years by the several artists who were the protagonists of the most experimental years of the Gutai activity – is still exclusively in the Japanese language. When confronting the same quotations on the Gutai group, or of their statements, in English summaries provided by Japanese publications and in publications from other nationalities, I found substantial differences and specify, in footnotes, which version I used.

Throughout the thesis, the considerable number of footnotes and their length is only partly due to the fact that in some I present the complete original

Portuguese version of excerpts from which I often quote just shorter parts, along with my own translation into the English language, especially in Chapters I and II. In all other cases, the information presented in the footnotes, though immediately useful and important for a complete understanding of the subject, can nevertheless be consulted after the reading of the corresponding paragraph in the main body of text, in order to allow for a more fluid reading. For the same reason, I opted to place the images of the artists' works (figures) at the end of each chapter, with the exception of those that are part of the discussion on the iconographic progression of a symbol towards archaic figurations, in Chapter I (illustrations on pp. 54–56), placed at the end of the respective topic (entitled *The archetypal image of the conjunction of the opposites*).

The thesis is divided into three chapters, each subdivided into topics. Each chapter concentrates on the artistic endeavour of one particular artist, respectively Lygia Clark, Hélio Oiticica and Jiro Yoshihara (as the mentor of the Gutai group, although several artists of the group are also individually considered). This structure reflects the methodology applied to analyse the inner imagery and its biographical progression in each of the artists. The methodological resources used were, namely, Mircea Eliade's patterns of archaic images, Carl Gustav Jung's formulations of the dynamic of the psyche, and Nise da Silveira's iconological approach to the interpretation of inner imagery. To a certain degree, these resources demanded an individual approach to each of the artists. The nature of their artistic practice, which shifted from painting into experimental practices that were for the most part ephemeral, was substantiated by the iconography of their work, but also in records of statements (interviews, diaries, texts, manifestos) that consistently demonstrated the integrity of the continuum between artist, creative process and work of art, in which the

separation of life from art appears devoid of sense. Notably, any set of methodological resources would have to encompass four complementary aspects of their artistic stance. The first is their avoidance of language in favour of a direct contact with the body. Examples of this are the succession of pioneering outdoor exhibitions and events on the stage through which Jiro Yoshihara challenged himself and the Gutai artists, or the empirical nature of Clark's setting of the *Estruturação do Self*, or the practical use of Oiticica's *Parangolé* capes. The second is their conceptual elusiveness substantiated, for example, in Clark's reservations concerning definitions provided by psychoanalysis, (such as 'neurotic' or 'psychotic'), or Yoshihara's classification of the Gutai works of art merely as 'good' or 'not good'. The third is their dismissal of theoretical considerations or discursive elaborations regarding content in the work of art, implied in Yoshihara's refusal to entitle Gutai's works, or in Clark's unwillingness to disclose a theory that could sustain her 'therapeutic setting' (eventually named as a 'cannibalistic theory'). And, finally, their dislike for the 'clothing of the intellect' (Shoichi, 2004, pp. 84) – its dependence on languages, on representation, and on meaning – remarkably expressed through their playfulness with verbal language, that is, through the combination of words to form new designations, such as the very term 'Gutai', Clark's 'full-void', Oiticica's *Tropicália* or his use of invented words such as *Parangolé*.

Chapter I (*The 'full-void'. Lygia Clark's poetics of embodiment*) is devoted to the analysis of the *Estruturação do Self*, a 'therapeutic setting' aimed at retrieving the 'normal state of the human being, which is the creative state' (Clark, 2005, p. 23), as the outcome of Clark's artistic research. The analysis explores the connection between the work of Lygia Clark and the work of Nise da Silveira, setting out from Silveira's analysis of one her cases, the schizophrenic patient

Octavio Ignacio. One particular series of this patient's artistic production is exemplary of the iconographic progression toward archaic symbols and toward less conscious levels of psyche, as well as of the self-organizing force that responded to his engulfing inner conflict, evinced in the imagery he created. Following Silveira's interpretation, which is centred on the primordial image of the 'conjunction of the opposites' (of which the Clark's 'full-void' is a figuration), and with complementary reasoning and descriptions from both Eliade and Jung, the symbolic transformation in Ignacio's images is unravelled as an utter illustration of the ascension of the *kundaliní*<sup>27</sup> (further explained on the next paragraph), depicted both as a physiological process and as an existential situation, the latter presented in utmost archaic symbols of self-accomplishment, or 'return to an unconditioned state'. This exemplary case is used to grasp Lygia Clark's accounts of her own inner imagery and the enduring primordial image within her creative research (the 'conjunction of opposites'), which culminated with the intuitive use of the integration of the two polarities or principles, feminine and masculine, as the ultimate aim of the *Estruturação do Self*.

The *kundaliní*, as a concrete empirical psycho-physiological process, is universal to the human species<sup>28</sup>. Through the activation of this energy, or its awakening from a dormant state, referred by Mircea Eliade as a 'syndrome', it is

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<sup>27</sup> *Kundaliní* is a Sanskrit word. '*Kundaliní* is a physical energy, of neurological nature and sexual manifestation. (...) The Freudian concept of libido and the Reichian concept of orgone came very close to the principle and anatomy of the *kundaliní* (...) in a lay term, more understandable, *kundaliní* can be translated simply as sexuality' (DeRose, 2007, 649, 654), translation by me.

<sup>28</sup> According to Sonu Shamdasani, 'Jung saw the inner processes, to which yoga gave rise, as universal and the particular methods employed to achieve them as culturally specific', and that 'Jung claimed that the symbolism of *Kundaliní* yoga suggested that the bizarre symptomatology that patients at times presented actually resulted from the awakening of the *Kundaliní*. He argued that knowledge of such symbolism enabled much that would otherwise be seen as the meaningless by-products of a disease process, to be understood as meaningful symbolic processes, and explicated the often peculiar physical localizations of symptoms' (Jung, 1996, p. xxvi). In my thesis, I argue that even if the artists referred to have not accomplished the concrete psycho-physiological process of the ascension of the *kundaliní*, knowledge about it is a patrimony that remains unconscious, to be projected under specific imagery, as I claim to be the case in the artwork I analysed.

possible to attain an unconditioned state, the advancement of consciousness to a stage of 'cosmicization', or hyper-consciousness, in Sanskrit '*samādhi*'. Despite remaining unconscious in the lay man, the *kundalinī* and the possibility of its awakening are a powerful matrix within the collective unconscious, an archetype that is activated – even if the process is not empirically accomplished – whenever the individual condition demands the reassertion of one's creative teleology or, for that matter, of Man's creative teleology. This usually occurs in response to an engulfing inner conflict or trial (for example, in the case of schizophrenic patients) or, as I argue to be the case in the experimental avant-garde endeavour, before a radical creative challenge. Under those circumstances, the images that emerge, archetypal (or primordial), are explicit reminders of that ultimate embodied and inalienable resource, self-empowering, regenerative, emancipatory, soteriological<sup>29</sup> – since it stands for the creative power that assists everything created.

While the 'syndrome' of the *kundalinī* has been obscured and disguised in the Jewish-Christian culture (just to mention one of the more domineering traditions on the Western context), it constitutes an outstanding reference in the Hindu culture. India developed a millenary psycho-physiological technology<sup>30</sup> to master that embodied intrinsic power, Yoga, particularly the Yoga of Tantric lineage<sup>31</sup>. Tantrism emphasizes the experimental use of the body and arguably resides in the roots of Yôga, having originally enabled, by means of its effective

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<sup>29</sup> Salvational.

<sup>30</sup> Arguably developed since the transition from the Paleolithic period to the Neolithic period and, surely, since 3000 BC, 5000 years ago.

<sup>31</sup> According to DeRose, 'Yôga is any strictly practical methodology that leads to *samādhi*' (DeRose, 2007, p. 18); according to Pātañjali (lived in the III century BC), in his *Yôga Sûtra*, 'Yôga is the suppression of the instability of consciousness' (DeRose, 1994), and '*samādhi* is the goal of Yôga' (DeRose, 2007, p. 650)

empirical techniques, the attainment of *samádhi*, the goal of Yoga<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, the election of references for the research pursued scholarly authority on the acknowledgement of the syndrome of the *kundaliní*, primarily with Eliade's and Jung's studies on the subject<sup>33</sup>.

The relevance of the subject of the *kundaliní* came forth with the observation, on the work of the Post-Neoconcrete and the Gutai artists, of the recurrence of the pattern of images of 'absolute beginning', the existential situation expressed through figurations of 'the centre of the world' (the circle, the enclosure), 'the change in the mode of being' (the initiatory cabin, the rupture of plane), 'ascension' (flight, the marriage of Heaven and Earth), 'return to the origin' (the embryo, the merging of all forms), 'cosmological solidarity' (the soil in process, germinal luminosities, integration of the feminine principle), and 'the union of polarities', all of them as much projections as reminders of that radically human concrete psycho-physiological process. And, while the resonance of this syndrome may thus be inferred in the majority of the cases of these artists, both Clark and Shiraga explicitly mention Tantrism as a reference in their creative process, albeit with very different scales of importance in each case<sup>34</sup>. In addition

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<sup>32</sup> '*Samádhi* is the state of hyperconsciousness and self-knowledge that only Yoga can provide' (DeRose, 2007, p. 51), in the original version: '*Samádhi* é o estado de hipersconsciência que só o Yôga proporciona'. According to Shivánanda 'no *samádhi* is possible without the *kundaliní*', on the original version, 'nenhum *samádhi* é possível sem a *kundaliní*' (DeRose, 2004, p. 650).

In Chapter I, note 58 to 61 and note 149 give elements on the Hindu tradition of Yôga and of its theoretical correspondent, *Sámkhya*, as well as on Tantra, that may be regarded as the behavioural correspondent of Yôga. In Chapter II, notes 85 and 86 also refer specific aspects of Yoga techniques, with the definition of *samádhi*, among others.

<sup>33</sup> In Chapter I, note 31 describes the work of Eliade, and its relation with the work of Jung. Note 46 describes the work of Silveira and its relation with the work of Jung, as well as her connections to authors from the anti-psychiatric movement. Note 50 explains the divergence between Jung and Freud, while the sub-chapter 'Symbolic transformation' explains the inadequacy of the Freudian psychoanalysis to the purpose of this research.

<sup>34</sup> In Chapter I, note 151 follows a quotation on the 'tantric process' by Lygia Clark and presents essential references for a definition of Tantra. In Chapter III, notes 66 and 69 also refer to the Tantric tradition, in this case exploring the coincidence between the arguably remote aboriginal stratum that likely favoured the dissemination of the Tantric Buddhism tradition in Japan, that heavily marked certain *kami* rituals; and note 79, refers a quotation by Kazuo Shiraga, who was a Buddhist monk himself, on the effect of the Tantric techniques on his artistic practice.

to this, the *kami* rites (analysed in relation to the Gutai work) that developed the Japanese artistic and performance traditions of *waka*, *Noh* and *kagura* involved originally the practice of Tantric techniques<sup>35</sup>.

As a concrete empirical psycho-physiological process, and despite remaining a predominantly unconscious type of knowledge, the syndrome of the ascension of the *kundaliní* is a possibility, an embodied program, which is universal to the human species. It is my thesis, however, that the phenomenon of the ascension of the *kundaliní* is projected in imagery – either through references or figurations of its ultimate liberating aim, or of the workings of its subtle physiology – as a reminder of a power of emancipation that is also universal to human beings. Both in the creative process and in the artistic enterprise – particularly in the avant-garde artistic endeavour, as I argue in my interpretation of the work of Clark, Oiticica, and the Gutai group – the phenomenon of the ascension of the *kundaliní* remains as a projection, as a reminder of that largely unconscious resource, of an ultimate inner power. However audaciously experimental the artistic practices of these artists may have been, or indeed the pursuit or some level of awareness of the psycho-physiological process itself (exemplified in references by both Clark and Shiraga), the thesis I propose comes from my interpretation of their work, and is never directly envisaged by any of the artists. Conscious knowledge and psycho-physiological technologies that enable the guided ascension of the *kundaliní* pertain to the realm of the ancient tradition of Yoga, and are fully developed by its practitioners, which was not the case of any of the artists I studied.

To a great extent, Chapter II (*HO | ME. Hélio Oiticica and Mircea Eliade. Tendency toward the concrete. Radical mythology of initiatory pattern*)<sup>36</sup>, is the

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<sup>35</sup> See Chapter III, Embodying the creative potency.

identification of the primordial imagery of ‘absolute beginning’ in the work of Hélio Oiticica. Notwithstanding, his paradigmatic works of the *Mangueira experiment* and the *Whitechapel experiment* are, in different ways, exemplary of an ‘initiatory pattern’, respectively with the primordial imagery of ‘flight’, that Haroldo de Campos named ‘hand-glider to ecstasy’, and of ‘initiatory cabin’ or ‘labyrinth’, that, taking from Haroldo de Campos, I named ‘galactic dwellings’; these works are concerned with the verification that, in order to restore, or to return to the ‘creative time’, to an ‘unconditioned state’, it is necessary to abolish the preceding mode of being, the body taken as a primary resource to serve this purpose, both aspects constituting an essential trait of the ‘initiatory pattern’.

In order to fit this intent of modification, or ‘radical change’, the format of the experience that Oiticica designs for the body gives evidence to a ‘tendency toward the concrete’, as Mircea Eliade presented it: as a tendency that ‘[emphasizes] the necessity for direct experience, for realization, for practice (...) a tendency toward the act, toward experimental verification’ (Eliade, 1990, p. 40), ‘based almost entirely on immediate, concrete data, still hardly separated from their physiological substratum’ (Eliade, 1990, p. 144)<sup>37</sup>. In an initiatory pattern, the concrete procedures enacted by the body draft an ‘initiatory death’, an event that results in a complete re-organization of the sense experience, radically changing the individual, another essential trait of this pattern.

Complementary, I draw an analysis on Oiticica’s ‘will of a new myth’ (Figueiredo, 1986 p.73), the stance that binds his pivotal works in the leap from painting to the act. Following Eliade’s recommendation to dissociate the ‘idea of “myth” from “word” and “fable”<sup>38</sup> (...) and connecting it with “sacred action”,

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<sup>36</sup> Previously published in Braga, 2008, pp. 67-109.

<sup>37</sup> See note 15.

<sup>38</sup> ‘cf. Homeric use of *mythos*: “word”, “discourse”’.



“significant gesture” and “primeval event” (Eliade, 1971, p. 416), Oiticica’s works are understood not merely as new creations, but as ‘new orders of creation’, thus placing his experiments in the context of the ‘origin myth’, that is, in a ‘radical mythology’, which endows artistic creation with an anthropocosmic attribute, equaled both to the embryonic and the cosmogonic creations.

The core of Chapter III (*Encircling the force of life. Jiro Yoshihara and Gutai*) regards the approach to the innovative practices of the Gutai group through the frame of the traditional *kami* celebrations. Going beyond the iconographic similitude between them, since the resemblance of figurations and circumstances, while suggestive, is not systematic<sup>39</sup>, the analysis departs from the origin myth that presided the *kami* celebrations that, in turn, developed the Japanese artistic and performance traditions of *waka*, *Noh* and *kagura*. The continuity between the *Kami* celebrations and the Gutai work seemingly resides on the empirical search and accomplishment of an original creative command, allowed by the integrity of the relationship between body and matter, which provides the power of enactment. In the work of the experimental years of the Gutai group, the recurrence and coherence of primordial images belonging to the pattern of

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<sup>39</sup> The fact that the Gutai exhibitions took place outdoors and ran also during the night, or in the stage, sites typical of *kami* celebrations, as well as the iconographic similitude between some items of *matsuri* festivals and the Gutai works, and the equivalence between the rhythm of the *matsuri* and the Gutai actions, as explained by Ming Tiampo (Tiampo, 2003), are important hints to motivate a deeper analysis on the continuity of the practices of the Gutai group and the *kami* celebrations. In itself, this iconographic reading seems to be as plausible as the interpretation of the experimental work of the Gutai group as a post-war recollection on violence, as Michael Lucken suggests (Lucken, 1999, p. 22): ‘Shimamoto Shozo se souvient dans ses expériences musicales “du vacarme des avions” et des “déflagrations d’explosifs” et, pour peindre, se sert parfois d’un “canon”, qui projette les couleurs sur la toile. Motonaga Sadamasa utilise un “canon à fumée”, dont sortent des volutes blanches et Shiraga Kazuo, pour reprendre le titre d’une oeuvre très célèbre de 1955, où on le vit se rouler dans un tas de mortier, “lutte contre la boue” (tsuchi ni idomu). Nous pourrions aussi placer dans la même perspective le spectacle de bris d’objets proposé par Kanayama Akira lors de la première exposition de “l’art Gutai sur scène” (1957), les spectaculaires panneaux déchirés de Murakami Saburo (1955) ou les parapluies déchiquetés et piétinés de Sumi Yasuo (1956)’.

‘absolute beginning’ is impressive, immediately noticeable if one has learned how to recognize them, as the final entries of the chapter demonstrate<sup>40</sup>.

The result of the enquiry on the relation between the creative process and the engagement of the body in the practices of these artists is condensed in the title of the text of the dissertation, *The Archaic Makes the Avant-Garde*. The research explores the verification that, underlying the experimental, radical search for the new rests an embodied knowledge, universal and original, albeit mostly unconscious: an inner program of emancipation. Projections of these knowledge, its concrete psycho-physiology and its ultimate result, are explicitly evinced in archaic figurations that inexorably re-emerge in splendid suggestions, in the most deeply human way assisting a teleology of creation.

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<sup>40</sup> In the case of the Gutai group, the available sources to confirm the genuineness and recurrence of the imagery in each artist are scarce when compared to the cases of Hélio Oiticica and Lygia Clark, since fundamental sources such as the Gutai journals, that originally comprise a summarized presentation in English, contain statements of the artists which are yet to be translated from the Japanese.

## IMAGES

### INTRODUCTION



Fig. 1

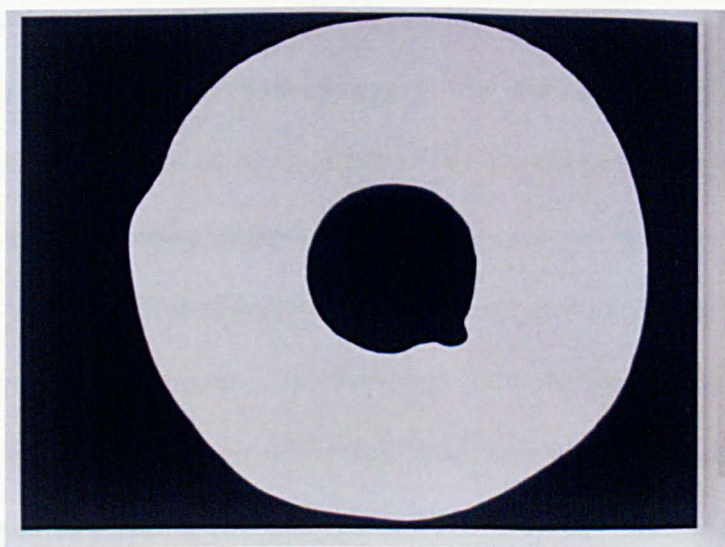


Fig. 2

Fig. 1 – Hélio Oiticica, *Bolide B40-66, Appropriation – Box Nr. 3*, 1966 (Oiticica, 2008, 186)

Fig. 2 – Jiro Yoshihara, *White Circle*, 1966 (Yoshihara, 2005, 198)

CHAPTER I

THE FULL VOID. LYGIA CLARK'S POETICS OF EMBODIMENT.

- BEYOND SYMBOLIZATION
- SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATION
- THE ARCHETYPAL IMAGE OF THE CONJUNCTION OF THE OPPOSITES
- NUMINOSITY AND THE ARCHETYPE, INDIVIDUATION AND THE SYMBOL
- THE 'FULL-VOID': AESTHETICS AS AN 'ETHICAL-RELIGIOUS' SENSE
- ARCHAIC IMAGERY OF A BOND OF COSMOLOGICAL ORGANIC SOLIDARITY
- THE "ESTRUTURAÇÃO DO SELF": REVERTING THE SYMPTOM INTO SYMBOL

In this chapter I present a reading of Lygia Clark's *Estruturação do Self* (*Structuring of the Self*), the final stage of her artistic practice which lasted from 1976 to 1988, regarding it as the culmination of her research, in view of the coherence between the development of the successive stages of her work and the progression of her inner imagery, that she consistently recorded in detailed written accounts. My analysis of her artistic practice follows three complementary courses.

The first course focuses on the recurrence of the core imagery of 'the full-void' (in Portuguese, 'o vazio-pleno') throughout Lygia Clark's entire artistic practice. The image of the 'full-void', seemingly originated in a childhood reverie and was established early on in Clark's work, from 1954 to 1959 during her Neoconcrete experience with painting. At this stage, the 'full-void' expressed the existential situation of creative accomplishment, in which the work of art was viewed as the means to ascribe value to the void – the means whereby 'man

comes from the void to reach the 'full-void'" (Clark, 1997, pp. 11-113).

During the following phase of her work, in her shift from painting into the manipulation of planes and surfaces with the series *Bichos (Animals)*, from 1960 to 1963, and also during the experiential episode *Caminhando (Walking)*, in 1963, the 'full-void' underlay the assertions of 'the living time' and of 'the living act', and the resulting ideas of 'totality' and 'precariousness'. Her practice subsequently evolved into the research on the experimental engagement of the body in individual and collective situations, in which she led the participants to empirically explore the core and boundaries of the subjective conception of the body, throughout the series that started with *Nostalgia do Corpo (Longing for the Body)* in 1963, to the *Corpo Coletivo (Collective Body)*, in 1974. Here, the 'full-void' underlay the assertions of 'living culture' and 'rite without myth'. In the final phase, with the one-on-one therapeutic setting of the *Estruturação do Self*, Clark induced her patients into a state of receptive relaxation to present them with a sequence of sensorial experiences mediated by the *Objetos Relacionais (Relational Objects)*, in which the 'full-void' would underlie the assertion of 'the creative state'.

The second course of my analysis focuses on the progression of the inner imagery that emerged from Lygia Clark's pivotal psychic crisis in Carboneras, Spain, in 1970. I regard this imagery as a complex of images of initiation akin to those that in archaic traditions prepare a 'medicine man' for the vocational activity of healing, underlying the artist's aim to use art as a means to re-establish the creative drive. This perspective also brings new elements to the understanding of the development of her experiments with the body within the 'therapeutic setting' *Estruturação do Self*. Significantly, the successive stages from *Nostalgia do Corpo*, in 1963, to *A Casa é o Corpo (The House is the Body)*, in 1969,

and *Corpo Coletivo* (*Collective Body*), in 1974, would be enacted, in this specific order, throughout an entire academic year by her students at Sorbonne. The experiment would start with the 'dismemberment' of the body, proceeding to its reassemblage, and ultimate dissolution in the collective, three stages that, according to Mircea Eliade's interpretation of archaic patterns of images, typically characterize the modification of the body and of the sense experience in archaic initiations of 'medicine men'.

The third course of my analysis takes the image of the 'full-void' as a primordial reference to the condition of psychic parity, and inherent situation of creative accomplishment, which allows for the understanding of the *Estruturação do Self* as a 'therapeutic setting for illnesses of the creative imagination' (Clark, 2005, p. 23). I use the conception of symbol by Carl Gustav Jung (explained in this chapter) such as it was asserted by the Brazilian psychiatrist Nise da Silveira to theorize and empirically support the remarkable symbolic progression that occurred in the artistic endeavour of her schizophrenic patients (also explained in this chapter). Through this conception of symbolic progression, the *Estruturação do Self* is thus envisaged as a releasing process that reverts the symptom into symbol, establishing the parity of the psyche, retrieving the 'normal state of the human being, which is the creative state' (Clark, 2005, p. 23).

## THE FULL VOID. LYGIA CLARK'S POETICS OF EMBODIMENT.

G.B.: I have the feeling that something I've pursued through all my writing has been the subject of energy, the nature of vitality, and where, and if, and how, it resides in art works. (...)

L.S.: But what is energy, is it a force?

G.B.: It's the prime source of the universe.'

Guy Brett interviewed by L. Sandino (Brett, 2007, p. 212)

### BEYOND SYMBOLIZATION

During the last years of her life, from 1976 to 1988, Lygia Clark developed a therapeutic practice that she entitled *Estruturação do Self* (*Structuring of the Self*). With obvious connotations with a psychological background of references that led her research and originated previous works<sup>1</sup>, her endeavour concerned a labour with the unconscious<sup>2</sup>, beyond verbal awareness (Clark, 2005, p. 15)<sup>3</sup>, beyond discursive meaning or elaboration, and beyond symbolization (Clark, 2005, p. 60)<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Suely Rolnik, Lygia Clark's work implicating the body developed in four different phases: *Longing for the Body*, 1966 (*Nostalgia do Corpo*), *The House is the Body*, 1967-69 (*A Casa é o Corpo*), *Body is the House*, 1968-70 (*Corpo é a Casa*), and *Collective Body*, 1972-75 (*Corpo Colectivo*) (Clark, 2005, p. 15).

<sup>2</sup> '... I ended up proposing things from psychology, which I would never, ever, call unconscious, but any way I do my work with the unconscious'; in the original version: '... acabei propondo coisas de psicologia, que eu não chamaria nunca, jamais, de inconsciente, mas de qualquer maneira eu faço meu trabalho com o inconsciente'. All translations are mine unless otherwise stated.

<sup>3</sup> 'It happens a lot with me, all of a sudden I start raising and grab a part of the client's body, without her having asked me to. And when she gets up, she says: "the moment you raised, you placed the hand exactly on the spot I wanted you to put it, which was necessary for me". It's the pre-verbal thing'; in the original version: '... acontece muito comigo, de eu de repente começar a levantar e pegar numa parte do corpo da cliente, sem que ela tivesse pedido. E quando ela levanta, me diz: "Naquele momento que você levantou, você colocou a mão exactamente no lugar que eu queria que você colocasse, que era o necessário para mim". É a coisa pré-verbal'.

<sup>4</sup> Talking about the *Estruturação do Self*, Lygia Clark says: '... I have the experience with many people who really don't symbolize, and the thing itself is so clear that there is no need to

The *Estruturação do Self* (figs. 1-6) consisted mostly in one-to-one sessions (Clark, 1995, p. 25)<sup>5</sup> that took place at a consultation room at her home, in Rio de Janeiro<sup>6</sup>. The sessions were experimental: what went on might be described as a living experience<sup>7</sup> based on a bodily engagement and with few, albeit important, verbal occurrences (Clark, 2005, p. 60)<sup>8</sup>. Guy Brett uses the term 'life-act' to synthesize the 'practices and insights' of Lygia Clark's work:

The proposal of Lygia Clark is embodied in the act, and enacted in the body. It exists in the moment that you do it or live it and nothing remains afterwards. And yet, in its very simplicity, sensuality and ephemerality, it is also a thing of the mind. (...) [artist, mediating object and spectator] evolved organically in a process in which lived experience and thought were completely interdependent and inseparable (Brett, 2004, p. 27).

Handled by the artist, to be sensed or manipulated by the client, a number of candid objects made out of simple everyday life materials would facilitate the bridging into the bodily realm. The concrete qualities of the *Objetos Relacionais* (*Relational Objects*)<sup>9</sup> (figs. 1-6) would tranship through sensory channels and

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symbolize, because the thing itself is in itself whole'; in the original version: '... tenho experiência com muita gente que não simboliza mesmo, e é tão clara a coisa em si, que não há necessidade de simbolizar, porque a coisa em si é ela por inteiro'.

In 1968, in an interview to Vera Pedrosa, while developing the series of works *A Casa é o Corpo* (*The House is the Body*), the artist was already clear about this: 'Presently, the allegory, instead of communicating something, extracts from communication what is more alive in it. Thus, the real is more important. If [communication is] anything, the attempt to charge it with a symbolical meaning is weakening it' (Clark, 1997, p. 227); on the original version: 'A alegoria, atualmente, em vez de comunicar alguma coisa, retira da comunicação o que ela tem de mais vivo. Assim, o real é mais importante. Se alguma coisa é, tentar colocar-lhe por cima um sentido simbólico é enfraquecê-la'.

<sup>5</sup> Lygia Clark worked for a time, exceptionally, with a couple.

<sup>6</sup> In Copacabana, at R. Prado Júnior, nr. 16, 8<sup>th</sup> floor.

<sup>7</sup> 'Vivência' is the Portuguese term for 'living experience'.

<sup>8</sup> 'I don't carry out an interview, the person gets in and wants to tell the story. I say: if you knew your story you wouldn't be here. Take off your clothes, lie down and let's start working'; in the original version: 'Eu não faço entrevista, a pessoa entra e quer contar a história. Eu digo: se você soubesse a sua história, você não estaria aqui. Dispa-se, deite e vamos começar o trabalho'.

<sup>9</sup> *Objeto Relacional* (*Relational Object*) is a term used by Lygia Clark to refer to the objects that she used in the *Estruturação do Self*. Although these objects come as a result of her experiments during previous phases of her work, the designation 'relational object' is likely to have been an influence from Donald Winnicott and Melanie Klein. The former, whose conception of the 'transitional object', prompting 'transitional phenomena', such as 'primitive agonies' (Clark, 1997, p. 321) in the 'transitional space' between child and mother, was likely taken into account by Lygia Clark, due to his views concerning playfulness and the creative processing implied in that



bodily systems, revealing sites, accidents within, an ingrained imagery to be confronted with. In Lygia Clark's words, these objects, 'in contact with the body, by their physical qualities, cause the affective memory to emerge, bringing experiences that the verbal memory is unable to detect' (Clark, 2005, p. 20)<sup>10</sup>. She remarked that 'the silence, at the moment of the session during which I leave the client with the objects, is very important', given that 'silence sews one' (Clark, 2005, p. 20)<sup>11</sup>. Lula Wanderlei, who would bring Lygia Clark's work into the institutional ground of psychiatry, described the *Objetos Relacionais* (*Relational Objects*) and their part on the *Estruturação do Self*:

they are objects with a specific tactile sensorial quality, which do not

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relationship. The latter, Melanie Klein, was specifically referred to concerning her view of aggressive fantasies, in this case imposed onto intermediate objects, that led Clark to speak of a 'partial object' that, in fact, did not define the intent of the *Objeto Relacional* (Clark, 1997, p. 321). However much Clark appreciated the work of these psychoanalysts, for her their influence remained in the background of her psychoanalytical conceptions, while the actual techniques she used in the *Estruturação do Self* involved namely Mme. Karlicow's relaxation technique, or the Sapir's method of verbal induction, which she eventually discarded. See note 164.

<sup>10</sup> In the original version: 'os objetos relacionais em contato com o corpo fazem emergir por suas qualidades físicas a memória afetiva, trazendo experiências que a memória verbal não consegue detectar'.

<sup>11</sup> Lygia Clark was straightforward about this: 'The "*estruturação do self*" ("*structuring of the self*") happens in the pre-verbal space. During this phase of the work, silence is totally respected and the word intervenes afterwards, if the person wishes to express verbally images or sensations they have lived'; in the original version, "A '*estruturação do self*' se dá no espaço pré-verbal. Durante esta fase do trabalho o silêncio é totalmente respeitado e a palavra intervém depois, se a pessoa quiser expressar verbalmente imagens ou sensações vividas" (Clark, 1997, p. 322). 'The silence at the moment of the session in which I leave the client with the objects, for example, is very important. That client, for example, during the last session, made a long reflection with only one sentence and then he fell asleep. We stood for an hour, I was sitting on the floor, he was sleeping, and there was no talking. You know that silence sews one'; in the original version: 'O silêncio no momento da sessão em que deixo o cliente com os objetos, por exemplo, é muito importante. Aquele cliente, por exemplo, na última sessão, fez uma grande reflexão com uma só frase e depois ele dormiu. Ficamos uma hora, eu sentada no chão, ele dormindo, e não se falava nada. Você sabe que o silêncio costura a pessoa' (Clark, 2005, p. 60). Lula Wanderlei (Novoa, 2005) describes the *Objetos Relacionais* (*Relational Objects*): '(...) I also learned through those experiences to make a reading not only of the experience, but also of the living experience of the clients, the way they lived time and space, the objects. (...) I don't consider it psychotherapy, because I don't have control over the process. I offer an object, phenomenologically deconstructed so that you can appropriate it and reconstruct it, reconstructing your own body. It is up to the client to do that or not and it is up to me to follow up the construction he makes with that object and if it is valid for him or not'; in the original version: '... aprendi também através dessas experiências a fazer leituras não só da experiência, mas da vivência dos clientes, o modo deles vivenciarem o tempo e o espaço, os objetos. (...) eu não considero uma psicoterapia, porque eu não tenho domínio do processo. Eu ofereço um objeto, fenomenologicamente desconstruído para que você aproprie-se dele e o reconstrua, reconstruindo seu próprio corpo. Cabe ao cliente fazer isso ou não e a mim seguir qual é a construção que ele faz com aquele objeto e se ela é válida para ele ou não'.

bring a visual language that might endow them with meaning, apart from the relation they establish with the body. They gain significance within the relation they establish with the body through a language specific of the body and, if you attain that relationship, you go into the subjective, you'll come out of the psychotic position. Because you give meaning to the objects, you give meaning to your body and to life itself. That is, in synthesis, the experience of the *Structuring of the Self* (Novoa, 2005).

This path of self-recognition would lead to a 'state of art without art' (Clark, 2005, p. 23)<sup>12</sup>: Suely Rolnik named it 'therapeutics for illnesses of the creative imagination' (Clark, 2005, p. 23)<sup>13</sup> while, in Lygia Clark's own words, it aimed at retrieving the 'normal state of the human being, which is the creative state' (Clark, 2005, p. 23)<sup>14</sup>. With this sense, Lygia Clark repeated that 'a psychotic should not be regarded as mad, but as an artist without artwork' (Clark, 2005, p. 23)<sup>15</sup>.

Clark's view of the relation between, on one side, psychotic condition and, on the other side, what might be referred as the creative process and its enacting, is notoriously similar to the conceptions on the same subject held by the psychiatrist Nise da Silveira, whose lifetime research was devoted to the understanding of the schizophrenic condition. From the 1940s onwards, at the STOR of the Engenho de Dentro<sup>16</sup>, in Rio de Janeiro, Nise da Silveira lead a

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<sup>12</sup>: '... able to live an aesthetic experience in the full sense: the "state of art without art" in the original version: 'podendo viver uma experiência estética no sentido pleno: o "estado de arte sem arte"'.

<sup>13</sup> In the original version: 'terapêutica para as doenças da imaginação criadora'.

<sup>14</sup> Suely Rolnik quotes the testimony of the musician and composer Jards Macalé, when he recalls Lygia Clark's words: 'Whenever you feel empty, don't fight against the void. Don't fight against anything. Let yourself remain empty. Little by little you'll be filled until you get back to the normal state of the human being, which is the creative'; in the original version: 'Quando você se sentir vazio, não lute contra o vazio. Não lute contra nada. Deixe-se ficar vazio. Aos poucos você vai se preenchendo até voltar ao estado normal do ser humano, que é o criativo'.

<sup>15</sup> In the original version: 'nunca trate um psicótico como louco mas sim como um artista sem obra de arte'.

<sup>16</sup> STOR (Seção de Terapêutica Ocupacional), Section of Occupational Therapy, at the Centro Psiquiátrico Nacional de D. Pedro II (National Psychiatric Centre D. Pedro II), Engenho de Dentro, Rio de Janeiro. After finishing her studies in Medicine in 1926 and her training at the Neurological Clinic of Antônio Astregésilo in 1933, Nise da Silveira (b. Maceió, 15 February 1906, d. Rio de Janeiro, 30 October 1999) started working as a psychiatrist in 1933, at the

pioneering psychiatric practice centred on the component of occupational therapy, that she would call 'the emotion of dealing' (Silveira, 2006a, p. 22)<sup>17</sup>.

Nise da Silveira always refused to use violent treatment, such as electroshock, insulin therapy or lobotomy, in her psychiatric practice, and strove to release the schizophrenic patient from the psychiatric institution, by breaking the cycle of readmissions that resulted from the conventional approach to the schizophrenic condition. She acknowledged that it was 'almost impossible to assemble at the hospital the favourable conditions for an efficient treatment to be tried out' (Silveira, 2005, p. 70), because the return of the patient to reality depended 'before anything else on a relationship of trust with someone, a relationship that will slowly widen until it enables the contact with other people and with the environment' (Silveira, 2005, p. 67). Therefore, the efficacy of the treatment required that the patient had 'someone to lean on and affectively

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'Hospital da Praia Vermelha', Rio de Janeiro, but was withdrawn from the public service in 1936 by the government of Getúlio Vargas, after being denounced for owning Marxist books. She was reintegrated in 1944, at the National Psychiatric Centre D. Pedro II (Centro Psiquiátrico Nacional de D. Pedro II), Engenho de Dentro, Rio de Janeiro. Due to her refusal to use violent treatment in psychiatric practice, such as electroshock, insulin therapy or lobotomy, she was transferred to the occupational therapy area and founded the STOR, which came to provide seventeen different activities for the residents, and where she remained from 1946 to 1974. The painting studio was opened on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 1946, headed by the painter Almir Mavignier, who worked at the Psychiatric Centre as an administrative and was transferred to the STOR. In 1952, as a result of the artistic activity and research at STOR, she created the Museum of the Unconscious, whose collection, along with her own research, have been presented in books, films, and more than 100 exhibitions in Brazilian art institutions (such as the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo, in 1949, the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro, in 1975, the XVI São Paulo Biennial, in 1981, or the Rediscovery Exhibition, by the São Paulo Biennial Foundation, in 2000) and abroad.

<sup>17</sup> 'We prefer to say emotion of dealing, an expression used by one of the clients of Casa das Palmeiras, as it suggests the emotion caused by the manipulating of the materials of work, one of the essential conditions for the effectiveness of the treatment'; in the original version: 'Preferimos dizer emoção de lidar, expressão usada por um dos clientes da Casa das Palmeiras, pois sugere a emoção provocada pela manipulação dos materiais de trabalho, uma das condições essenciais para a eficácia do tratamento'. After making a cat out of wool, the client wrote: 'Cat, simply angora from the bush/blue eyes nose grey/chestnut cat/brown male ear/now quickness/emotion of dealing' (Melo, 2001, p. 103); in the original version: 'Gato, simplesmente angorá do mato/Azul olhos nariz cinza/Gato marrom/Orelha castanho macho/Agora rapidez/Emoção de lidar'. The Casa das Palmeiras was founded in 1956, destined for the treatment and rehabilitation of former institutionalized psychiatric patients, as 'an intermediate degree between the hospital routine, non individualized, and the life within the family and society' (Melo, 2001, p. 21), and where 'the affectivity that catalyzes the self-healing forces is an every day presence' (Melo, 2001, p. 100).

invest in', and that 'the more serious the schizophrenic state is, the more the patient will feel the need to find a point of reference and a support' (Silveira, 2005, pp. 60-61). Nise da Silveira named this bond the 'catalytic affection' (Silveira, 2005, p. 58)<sup>18</sup>, a relation in which the 'companion'<sup>19</sup> played the role of a catalyst, advocating that it would be necessary that 'this other person is very seriously motivated by the desire to penetrate the hermetic world of the schizophrenic', and that 'in order to establish a relationship of friendship and understanding, there must be constancy, patience and a non-restraining environment' (Silveira, 2005, p. 69)<sup>20</sup>. Empathy would guide the assistants on their work with the patients, often attending silently their actions, demonstrating attention and affection even through the patients' denser histrionic scribbling, and serving as a pull for the evolution on the patterns of gesture and on the resulting depictions<sup>21</sup>. Almir Mavignier, at the time a young artist and previously a member of the administrative staff of the Engenho de Dentro, was involved from the beginning with the creation of the studios, having had a decisive role at every stage of the process<sup>22</sup>. The outstanding character of

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<sup>18</sup> The Portuguese expression used by Nise da Silveira is 'afeto catalizador'.

<sup>19</sup> The Portuguese word used by Nise da Silveira is 'acompanhante'.

<sup>20</sup> With the same purpose of affective support, Nise da Silveira would encourage the presence of domestic animals as 'co-therapists', despite a persistent and often fatally damaging opposition within the institution: 'The dog, in particular, has qualities that make of it a stable reference point in the external world. He doesn't cause frustration, he gives unconditional affection, demanding nothing in return' (Silveira, 2005, pp. 70-71).

<sup>21</sup> This was the paradigmatic case of the relationship between the patient Fernando Diniz and the assistant Aparecida: while Fernando Diniz was submerged in an emotional crisis graphically conveyed as chaotic scribbles, and from the apparent absence of interchange with the assistant Aparecida, the shape of her face, eyes and hair, gave origin to the series *The Japanese Woman*, which prompted Fernando Diniz out of the scribbling and out of the peak of emotional crisis (Silveira, 2005, pp. 61-65).

<sup>22</sup> Almir Mavignier was studying with Arpad Szénes, who resided in Rio de Janeiro from 1940 to 1947, escaping from the occupation of France by the Nazi army. Glaucia Villas Bôas mentions two versions regarding the creation of the art studios at STOR. According to Mavignier, the idea of creating a painting studio at STOR was his, and Nise da Silveira immediately accepted it, for she had had that idea for a long time but no one to carry it out; according to Nise da Silveira, Mavignier was presented to her by the director of the hospital, Paulo Elejalde, who had knowledge of her wish to install a painting studio, and thought of the young painter to initiate it (Villas-Bôas, 2008). Mavignier set up the studio, looked out for likely gifted residents, taught them the basic techniques, and followed up their work, stimulating them to bring up different

the work produced at STOR was noticed by Carl Gustav Jung, as he observed the paintings of Nise da Silveira's patients exhibited at the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Congress of Psychiatry, in Zurich, in 1957: 'How is the environment in which these patients paint? I suppose they work surrounded by empathy and by people who don't fear the unconscious'<sup>23</sup>.

The presence of artists at the STOR, as assistants or visitors (Silveira, 2005, p. 8)<sup>24</sup>, as well as the support of art critics to the work taking place there<sup>25</sup>, would reach the so called Brazilian Constructivist Project, directly influencing the Concrete artistic movement in Rio de Janeiro and the whole of its Neoconcrete development<sup>26</sup>. Paulo Herkenhoff refers the 'extraordinary

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painting subjects, and helping them in learning when a work was finished by insistently providing them with new canvases. He wouldn't allow art magazines, not only following his belief that the artist should bring from within his own art subjects, but responding to Nise da Silveira's wish that the patient's imagery should be nurtured and preserved: 'Mavignier was taken by a true passion for his new work. He never tried to influence the patients that came to work at the studio; he respected and treated as equals those residents of the psychiatric hospital. He worked with me until his departure to Europe, in November of 1951' (Silveira, 2005, p. 8).

<sup>23</sup> Pedrosa cf. Amaral, 2000.

<sup>24</sup> 'At the end of the 1940s, Ivan Serpa and Abraão Palatnik, two young friends of Mavignier's that would be famed on the world of Brazilian arts, came often with him to the studio'.

Lygia Pape refers the Sunday visits to Engenho de Dentro with the three artists, Mário Pedrosa and also Décio Vitorino and Geraldo de Barros (PAPE, 1980, pp. 47-48: *Catiti catiti, na terra dos Brasis*. Dissertação de Mestrado, Instituto de Filosofia e Ciências Sociais, Departamento de Filosofia, UFRJ: Rio de Janeiro). The visitors would continue the meetings with the artists from Engenho de Dentro when they were no longer residents of the hospital. Besides Mavignier, Serpa and Palatnik, among others, Nise da Silveira refers Mário Pedrosa's visits to Emygdio and to Raphael, the latter also visited by Murilo Mendes.

<sup>25</sup> In her writings, Nise da Silveira frequently quotes Mário Pedrosa, namely from his art column at the Rio de Janeiro's newspaper *Correio da Manhã*, on the exhibitions, the art works and the artists from Engenho de Dentro. She also mentions, for instances, the comments about Raphael's drawings by Leon Degand, Sérgio Milliet, Antônio Bento and Flávio de Aquino.

<sup>26</sup> Haroldo de Campos, concretist poet from the avant-guard of the 40s, reports the history, genealogy and circumstances of the so-called Brazilian Constructivist Project, in his text *Noigandres. Construtivismo no Brasil. Concretismo e Neoconcretismo* (in: <http://www.artbr.com.br/casa/noigand/index.html>), describing as complementary the opposition between the São Paulo Concretist artists and its dissidence by the Rio de Janeiro Neoconcretist artists: '... it seems to me that both artistic orientations of that polemic and fertile period, with the natural differences of temperament and accomplishment, can be seen as variants – even complementary – of a "Brazilian Constructivist Project", title of the great retrospective exhibition presented in 1977 at the MAM of Rio and at the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, under the curatorship of the art critic and historian Aracy Amaral'; in the original version: '... parece-me que ambas as orientações artísticas daquele período fecundo e polêmico, com as naturais diferenças de temperamento e realização, podem ser vistas com variantes – até complementares – de um "Projeto Construtivo Brasileiro", título aliás da grande exposição retrospectiva apresentada, em 1977, no MAM do Rio e na Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, sob a curadoria da crítica e historiadora da arte Aracy Amaral'.

encounter between Mário Pedrosa and Nise da Silveira', whom, despite identifying with different references in the fields of psychology and of politics, the art historian and critic Pedrosa being a Freudian and Trotskyist, and Silveira being a Junguian and an anarchist, nevertheless shared the conception that 'a complete society wouldn't uphold the difference between work, experience, art and life' (Clark, 2005, pp. 81-82). Nise da Silveira pointed out the contrast between the attitude of the art critics and of the psychiatrists towards the accomplishment carried out at the Engenho de Dentro:

The art critics, for our surprise, have been far more attentive than the Brazilian psychiatrists to the plastic expression of the schizophrenics. In fact, the majority of the psychiatrists around the world refuse to acknowledge the artistic value of the paintings and drawings of the mentally ill. Entrenched in their positions, they maintain the same clichés and speak of "psychotic art" or "psychopathologic art". They remain clinched to the traditional concepts of psychiatry and stubbornly think that such painting is not but the reflection of psychic deterioration and its symptoms (Silveira, 2005, p. 8).

Herkenhoff also states that, with the artists Almir Mavignier, Ivan Serpa and Abraham Palatinik, 'the matrix of Rio de Janeiro's geometric art runs through Engenho de Dentro' and that, while in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, the artists were 'negotiating the passage from figurative form to abstraction', they were exposed, at Engenho de Dentro, to geometric painting even before knowing Max Bill<sup>27</sup>, through 'an absolute experience in terms of what might be the freedom of creation', in which 'geometric rationality would confront psychological overflowing', a basis that would enable Neoconcretism to 'radically insert subjectivity in the rational universe of geometry' (Clark, 2005, p. 82).

Lygia Clark's early Neoconcrete research ran from the 'discovery of the organic line' between surface and space, in the *Planos de Superfície Modulada*, 1955 (*Planes of Modulated Surface*), to the 'immanence of the act', in *Caminhando*, 1963

(*Walking*). According to Ferreira Gullar (Clark, 1997, pp. 59-67), this stage of her research originated with the painting *Plano de Superfície Modulada n.º1*, 1955 (*Plane of Modulated Surface nr.1*) (fig. 7), although the experiments that would lead to this work had started in 1954 with the *Descoberta da Linha Orgânica* (*Discovery of the Organic Line*) (fig. 8) and with the series *Quebra da Moldura* (*Breaking of the Frame*) (fig. 9)<sup>28</sup>. The *Plane of Modulated Surface* would afterwards evolve to the series *Espaço Modulado* (*Modulated Space*) (fig. 10), 1958, and *Ovo Linear* (*Linear Egg*) (fig. 11), 1958, *Ovo Contra-Relevo* (*Counter-relief Egg*) (fig. 12), 1959, *Contra-Relevo* (*Counter-Relief*) (fig. 13), 1959, and *Casulo* (*Cocoon*) (fig. 14), 1959, whereby the surface of the canvases gained a measure of tridimensionality.

These painting experiences would culminate in the series *Bichos* (*Animals*) (fig. 15), 1960-63, that was followed by the paradigmatic work *Caminhando* (*Walking*) in 1963 (fig. 16), with which Lygia Clark's practice shifted from painting to the manipulation of planes and surfaces (*Bichos*) and subsequently the experiential episode *Caminhando* in 1963. *Bichos* are metallic objects with articulated planes that could be manipulated into different possible configurations, and *Caminhando* consisted of the experience of cutting along the length of a Moebius strip of paper using a pair of scissors.

During the initial stage of her artistic practice, working with the more conventional medium of painting, Lygia Clark started off from the relation

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<sup>27</sup> Max Bill was awarded with the Prize of the 1<sup>st</sup> São Paulo Biennial Award in 1951.

<sup>28</sup> Ferreira Gullar traces Lygia Clark's trajectory explaining in detail the works which may be posited within the Neoconcrete development, but is far more succinct when approaching the works deriving from *Walking* (*Caminhando*), mentioning the name of only a few of the subsequent works and referring to the *Estruturação do Self* synthetically as 'attempts to therapeutic use' (in the original: 'tentativas de uso terapêutico', in: Clark, 2005, p. 60). A critical reading of Gullar's words, pointing out the absence of his typical thorough analysis and systemic approach regarding what he called the 'propositions of sensory experiment' ('proposições de experiências sensoriais', in: Clark, 2005, p. 67), makes it tempting to identify, along with Michael Asbury, those later works of Lygia Clark as 'post-neoconcrete'.

between form and background, the 'organic line' being the actual, real space that remained between two juxtaposed surfaces. This focus on the space between the canvas and its frame led to the dismissal of the latter, placing the question of pictorial enactment within the relation between surface and space, from a strictly optical perception to an 'organic' apprehension, that is, the sensing of a 'temporal space' (in the original, 'tempo-espaço') expressed in the 'organic lines'. These lines, external to the surface yet interpenetrating it in horizontals and verticals to produce an oblique tension, originated a dynamics of actual, real space on the two-dimensional surface, revealing the 'thread of space', or the 'cut of real space' (Clark, 2005, pp. 84-86)<sup>29</sup>. The relation between what Lygia Clark called 'expression' and this 'real space' is explained by her in the text *O Vazio Pleno* (*The Full-Void*):

Forms as well as all things express more than their simple physical presence (measure and weight). It is as if each thing radiated energy joining up with the energy of the real living space. When an object is placed in a space that is too big in relation to that object, the space does not cease to be empty and dead, but when this object finds its space, then the space that surrounds it is full. If the object is placed too close to other objects, I feel two contradictory forces clashing with each other. Man has this radiation bigger than that of any object and of the other animals. It is as if, because he is vertical, he is less settled on earth than the other animals. Therefore, his search for transcendence counterposes that polarity (earth-space) with the stubbornness and the intensity of a privileged being, terribly anguished, always being thrown upwards, bound by the feet by the organic side of his animal origin. On the moment the rectangle is burst and its surface is virtually inverted, the latter no longer being the thickness of space and becoming the thread of space, that expression already happens within that real space where all the radiating, living and cosmological forces act. The expression is immediately identified with that radiation organics-man, inside the same real dynamics (Clark, 2005, p. 112)<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>29</sup> Originally in *Lygia Clark e o espaço expressional concreto* (*Lygia Clark and the expressional concrete space*), interview by Edelweiss Sarmiento for the *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 July 1959, Sunday supplement, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> *O vazio-pleno* (originally published in *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 2 April 1960, Suplemento Dominical, p. 5); see in the Annexes the Portuguese and English versions of this



Presented on the Neoconcrete Manifest of March 1959, the premises of this artistic movement pointed, similarly, to a cosmological sense of the work of art in three complementary ways. Firstly, by stating the 'absolute integration' of time, space, form, colour, through which the geometric form would lose its objective character and become a vehicle for imagination:

because the work of art transcends the mechanical space, the notions of cause and effect lose any validity, and the notions of time, space, form, colour, are integrated in such a way – even by the fact that, as notions, they did not pre-exist the work of art – that it would be impossible to talk of them as decomposable terms.

Secondly, by stating the re-enactment of the primordial creation, given the fact that the work of art 'is always becoming present, always restarting the impulse that generated it and of which it was, in itself, already the origin'. And, finally, by remitting to the primeval experience, with the real, through the previously enounced features: 'if this description likewise sends us to the primary experience – full – of the real, it is because the neoconcrete art intends nothing more than relight that experience (Brito, 1999, pp. 10-11)'<sup>31</sup>. The integration of different

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text.

<sup>31</sup> Ronaldo de Brito summarizes the Neo-concrete Manifest as follows: 'The Neo-concrete Manifest is clear: it is a critical statement in face of the mechanistic detour of concrete art. But it is also a defence of a non-figurative art, with geometric language, against irrational tendencies of every kind. Dada and Surrealism are cited as retrograde movements. Mondrian, Pevsner and Malevitch are basic reference points. The text thus delimits what started out as the area of the neoconcrete operation: the constructivist ideologies, with its evolutionist readings of history of art, its proposals of social integration and its productive theories. The neoconcretism remains interested in the kind of positivity that is at the centre of the constructivist tradition – art as an instrument of construction of society (...) This is the neoconcrete truth: having been the apex of the Brazilian constructive consciousness – the producer of the likely most sophisticated formulations in that sense – and simultaneously the agent of its crisis, making way for its surpassing within the local process of art production'; in the original version: 'O Manifesto Neoconcreto é claro: trata-se de uma tomada de posição crítica ante o desvio mecanicista da arte concreta. Mas trata-se também de defender uma arte não-figurativa, de linguagem geométrica, contra tendências irracionais de qualquer espécie. Dadá e surrealismo são nominalmente citados como movimentos retrógrados. Mondrian, Pevsner e Malevitch são os pontos de referência básicos. O texto delimita, assim, o que seria de início a área de operação neoconcreta: as ideologias construtivas, com suas leituras evolucionistas da história da arte, suas propostas de integração social e suas teorias produtivas. O neoconcretismo permanece interessado na espécie de positividade que está no centro da tradição construtiva – a arte como instrumento de construção da sociedade. (...) Esta é a verdade neoconcreta: ter sido o vértice da consciência construtiva brasileira – produtor das formulações talvez mais sofisticadas nesse sentido – e

categories (in this case, time, space, form, colour) on a primordial unity, as well as the enunciation of the original creative action (the creative potency, or 'impulse') in each new creation, both bear a cosmological extent, the participation in the 'creative time': the 'fluidity' of categories is only attainable under a mythical condition, prefigured *in illo tempore*, the primordial 'creative time' when nothing was yet fixed and everything was possible; it is also in that 'Great Time' that the 'creating and arranging of the Cosmos took place' and, thus, the exemplary creative action, as well as every exemplary action to be repeated thenceforth (Eliade, 1971, p. 395)<sup>32</sup>. Finally, and most significantly, with the

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simultaneamente o agente de sua crise, abrindo caminho para sua superação no processo de produção de arte local' (Brito, 1999, pp. 8-9).

<sup>32</sup> 'It would be impossible to overstress the tendency – observable in every society, however highly developed – to bring back that time, mythical time, the Great Time. For this bringing back is effected without exception by every rite and every significant act'. This sentence could well synthesize one of the main verifications of Mircea Eliade's life long research, dedicated to the images that sprang from man's religious experience, which he conceived as 'religere', that is, the experience (presented to man as an image or figuration and a corresponding existential situation) that allows for man to re-establish the coherence between the deeper layers of unconscious knowledge and the awareness of the present. According to Gary Oldmeadow 'Eliade's task was to "revalorize" manifestations of the sacred, to restore to them their experiential and ontological meanings' (Oldmeadow, 1992, p. 18). Having spent three years studying in India, he completed his PhD in 1933 on the subject of Yôga, which would three years later become the book *Yoga, Immortality and Freedom*. Eliade, with Joachim Wach, are considered the founders of the 'Chicago School', at the University of Chicago, which influenced the study on religion during the second half of the XXth century. For the present research, the image of 'absolute beginning', or 'return to the "creative time"', is of the utmost importance, for it constitutes the core of the creative endeavour by both Post-Neoconcrete and Gutai artists, as well as an outstanding trace in the 'radical avant-garde'. In a straight continuity, several categories of images fall into the pattern of 'absolute beginning': the 'centre of the world', the 'change in the mode of being', the 'ascension', the 'return to the origin', the 'cosmological solidarity', and the 'union of polarities'. The patterns of images that Eliade established in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (Eliade, 1971) are figured as 'primal intuitions' within the immemorial experience of human kind, thus implying the notion of collective unconscious as well as the universal character, as matrices, of those patterns. And, while Eliade did not use Carl Gustav Jung's terminology, at least not systematically (terms such as psyche, archetype, primordial image or collective unconscious), his patterns of images can arguably be acknowledged as archetypes, and the images as primordial images, partly following Jung's definitions (Jung, 1990, pp. 242-297): 'one finds in Jung the more or less constant attempt to bring archaic cosmology and metaphysics back into the psychic domain while Eliade is prepared to go beyond it. This can be seen in the different senses in which Jung and Eliade use the term "archetypes": for Jung the archetypes are "structures of the collective unconscious" while Eliade uses the term in its neoplatonic sense of exemplary and "transhistorical" paradigms' (Oldmeadow, 1992, p. 11). And, likewise, while Jung tended to homologize dreams and myths, Eliade would distinguish them respectively as a 'simple experience and a creation of the human spirit' (Oldmeadow, 1992, p. 11). Eliade met Carl Gustav Jung in August 1950 in Ascona, at the occasion of the yearly Eranos conference. In 1952, Eliade interviewed Jung and, on the same year, Jung read Eliade's work on Shamanism (Eliade, 1989). In 1953, Eliade gave five two-hour long lectures at the Jung

importance ascribed by the neoconcrete statement to the primary 'full' experience of the real, these two aspects concur within present time and in an actual experience of the real — which points to a 'tendency toward the concrete' whereby the validation of concrete experience is equivalent to the validation of the elementary human actions and, primarily, the actions concerned with human existence and human genesis, including all the physiological acts. Those elementary actions not only 'assist man to approach reality' and 'wedge himself into Being, by setting himself free from merely automatic actions, (...) from meaninglessness and nothingness', but also become 'ceremonies by means of which man communicates with the *force* that stands for Life itself' (Eliade, 1971, pp. 31-33), thus conveying a view of man's creative teleology.

The motivation to understand the remarkable absence of figurative representations on the plastic production of schizophrenics and, conversely, the predominance of abstraction, stylization and geometric drawing is described by Nise da Silveira while observing her patients:

I watched them painting. I saw their grimacing faces. I was attentive to the furor that would take hold of their hands. I had the impression that they were living 'nameless and always more dangerous states of being'<sup>33</sup>. It was impossible for me in fact to accept the prevailing opinion according to which all non-figurative painting should mean erasure of affectivity and tendency to the dissolution of the real (Silveira, 2005, p. 11).

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Institute in Zurich. Oldmeadow (Oldmeadow, 1992, p. 6) refers that, when comparing these two authors 'One is constantly struck by parallels. For instance, Jung's work on alchemy and Eliade's on shamanism both provided a unified view of reality in which physical and psychic energy are two aspects, or dimensions, of a single reality'. And when sorting out their divergences, Oldmeadow explains that 'For all his sympathetic inquiries into primal mythologies and Eastern spirituality, and despite the importance of his excursions into other cultures, Jung remained resolutely European in his orientation: his intellectual anchorage, so to speak, was always in Europe', while Eliade's work ratifies his claim that his three years in India were "the essential ones in my life. India was my education" (Oldmeadow, 1992, p. 8). Nevertheless, Oldmeadow adds, 'Jung also remarks on the way in which our scientific knowledge impoverishes rather than enriches us by cutting us from the mythic world. This anticipates in striking fashion one of the most persistent motifs in Eliade's work on archaic cultures: the theme of archaic ontology and cosmic responsibility' (Oldmeadow, 1992, p. 10).

<sup>33</sup> Nise da Silveira uses Antonin Artaud's expression to refer to the psychic affection that falls into the category of schizophrenia.

While she empirically realized the impossibility of establishing codes, for abstract language creates itself at every instant (Silveira, 2005, p. 14), she acknowledged that 'at the hospital, geometric drawing gave evidence of the instinctive efforts invested to appease the emotional disorders and also revealed a search for security that could be expressed through stable constructions' (Silveira, 2005, p. 16). She went as far as to comment that 'in Latin America, the inorganic and the organic, reason and feeling, are close to each other, in the search for balance' (Silveira, 2005, p. 23).

In a 1974 letter to Hélio Oiticica, while developing the series *Corpo Coletivo* (*Collective Body*) (fig. 17) at the Sorbonne, namely the work *Baba Antropofágica* (*Anthropophagic Drool*) (fig. 18), Lygia Clark emphasises the creative and mythological nature of her psychoanalytic experience<sup>34</sup>, describing what she calls the 'dismembering' ('morcellement') of the body, to conclude with an aphoristic remark: 'geometry is born from the reflection of the body on my mind' (Clark, 1998, p. 233). Throughout the series that started with *Nostalgia do Corpo* (*Longing for the Body*) in 1963, to *Corpo Coletivo* (*Collective Body*) in 1974, Clark researched the experimental engagement of the body in both individual and collective situations. Here she empirically explored the core and boundaries of the subjective conception of the body. The participants in these experiments would grasp their body anew by means of different 'sensorial objects', as well as by physically relating to the bodies of the other participants.

*Nostalgia do Corpo* comprised the manipulation of a set of prepared objects arranged to explore the subtlety of sensorial perception, according to the

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<sup>34</sup> Lygia Clark was analysed by Pierre Fédida from 1972 to 1974 (Clark, 2005, p. 25). Paulo Herkenhoff refers the fact that, in 1972, the psychoanalyst had published a text about the

different sensorial modalities and the diverse areas of the body, thus contributing to their sensory enhancement, in what the artist would call the 'dismemberment' of the body. One of the artworks from *Nostalgia do Corpo* was *Pedra e Ar* (*Stone and Air*), which consisted of a stone and a simple plastic bag filled with air. The stone was placed on top of the plastic bag and laid in the participant's hands, who would then manipulate the bag moving the stone on its surface. In *Respire Comigo* (*Breathe With Me*), the pulling of a malleable plastic tube would produce the deep evocative noise of inhalation and exhalation.

A set of fairly elaborate devices, to be worn over specific areas of the body, such as the *Máscaras Sensoriais* (*Sensorial Masks*), the *Óculos* (*Goggles*), and a diversity of garments, to be worn on the whole body, such as the *O Eu E O Tu* (*The Me And The You*), would further intensify the new sense experience of one's own body throughout the following phase of her research, named *A Casa é o Corpo* (*The House is the Body*), from 1967 to 1969. From 1968 to 1970, also under the designation of *O Corpo é a Casa*, these experiences were prepared for groups, and the devices or garments, such as elastic nets, would give rise to structures in which the movement of one participant would influence and condition the entire group dynamic. Lygia Clark called this the reconstruction of the body, significantly naming the experiments as *Arquiteturas Biológicas* (*Biological Architectures*), or *Estruturas Vivas* (*Living Structures*).

From 1972 until 1975, in *Corpo Coletivo* (*Collective Body*), continuing with the collective character of the experiments, Lygia Clark directed the actions of the group upon one of the members, originating situations such as *Baba Antropofágica* (*Anthropophagic Drool*), or *Canibalismo* (*Cannibalism*), both in 1973,

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melancholic cannibal in the Gallimard psychoanalysis magazine, an issue dedicated to cannibalism.

which Clark saw as the culmination of the previous processes of dismemberment and reconstruction in an uncompromising exposure to and literal engulfment in the group collective.

While a direct influence of Nise da Silveira's therapeutic practice is not formally documented in Lygia Clark's line of work initiated with *Nostalgia do Corpo* (*Longing for the Body*) (1966) (fig. 19), which culminated in the *Estruturação do Self* (1976-1988)<sup>35</sup>, it is nevertheless significant that the artist should bequeath her 'therapeutic setting'<sup>36</sup> to Lula Wanderlei and Gina Ferreira, two psychiatrists who worked with Nise da Silveira at Casa das Palmeiras and who would bring Clark's work into their clinical practice, carrying it on to the present day<sup>37</sup>.

In the beginning of the 80s, after Lygia Clark returned to Rio de Janeiro<sup>38</sup>, Lula Wanderlei came to her in search of therapy, and became her friend and collaborator, learning how to handle the *Objetos Relacionais* and using them at his studio. Lula Wanderlei first tried the *Objetos Relacionais* with a young man

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<sup>35</sup> I feel tempted to consider, along with Michael Asbury, that this line of work goes beyond the Neo-concrete proposal, and may be regarded as a Post-Neoconcrete development (see note 27). On the continuation of the work *Estruturação do Self* (*Structuring of the Self*), in a letter to Guy Brett in 1984, Lygia Clark states that she had already found the several meanings of the work and, therefore, had lost interest in it: 'I have already found the meaning, in fact several meanings, of the present work. I am no longer interested in it' (Clark, 2005, p. 23); in the original version: 'já descobri neste atual trabalho o seu significado, que aliás são vários. Já não me interessa mais por ele'. Suely Rolnik goes as far as to say that, by 1981, the artist had already achieved what she was researching about with the proposal of the *Estruturação do Self*, and that the sessions would exhaust her increasingly more; the number of patients drastically diminished and she entrusted the proposal to actual therapists, namely Gina Ferreira and Lula Wanderley, for a likely adaptation of the work on the clinical field; she abandoned the work on February of 1988, following the advise of her psychoanalyst, Pierre Fédida; she died two months later.

<sup>36</sup> On the video-documentary *Lygia Clark. Memória do Corpo* (*Lygia Clark. Memory of the Body*), directed by Mário Carneiro, in 1984, the artist explains her concern in passing on her work. The term 'therapeutic setting' is used by Lula Wanderlei when referring to the *Estruturação do Self* also in that video.

<sup>37</sup> Lula Wanderlei and Gina Ferreira met at the Casa das Palmeiras, and later got married. Gina Ferreira had therapy sessions with Lygia Clark and Lula Wanderlei came with her to try the therapy. Lula Wanderlei would later create the Espaço Aberto ao Tempo (Space Opened to Time), active until the present time (see note 40). About Casa das Palmeiras see note 18.

<sup>38</sup> According to Suely Rolnik, Lygia Clark lived in Paris from 1950 to 1952, a period during which she studied with Arpad Székely, Isaac Dobrinsky e Fernand Léger, then later, in 1964, and finally from 1968 to 1976, teaching at the U. F. R. d'Arts Plastiques et Science de l'Art de

diagnosed as schizophrenic and, afterwards, accepted the invitation to participate on the treatment of an old anorexic woman, experimenting then with the complete setting of the *Estruturação do Self*:

With the work of Lygia Clark, contemporaneous art stigmatized as hermetic opens up the way amidst the social fragmentation, and is welcomed by anonymous people who are lost in the infirmaries and courtyards of hospitals, excluded by their families, by society and by culture (Wanderlei, 2002, p. 25).

Lula Wanderlei kept a permanent interchange with Lygia Clark throughout the years, working with emotionally conflicted young people sent to him by her (Wanderlei, 2002, p. 23). He worked with the *Estruturação do Self* at a room of an abandoned building in Engenho de Dentro, 'inverting many unwritten rules and concepts of psychiatry' (Wanderlei, 2002, p. 23), and as a result being transferred to the strict M1 Infirmary (Wanderlei, 2002, p. 26)<sup>39</sup>. This vicissitude prompted him, along with other like-minded colleagues, to conceive the Espaço Aberto ao Tempo (Novoa, 2005)<sup>40</sup>, which gave way to the Brazilian Psychiatric Reform

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l'Université de Paris, Sorbonne, from 1972 to 1976.

<sup>39</sup> Enfermaria M1, described as a 'psychiatric infirmary of authoritative structure'; in the original version: 'enfermaria psiquiátrica de estrutura autoritária'.

<sup>40</sup> Space opened to Time, described by Lula Wanderlei as 'a psychiatric institution whose form is defined by the needs of its participants'; in the original version, 'uma instituição psiquiátrica cuja forma é definida, permanentemente, a partir das necessidades de seus participantes' (Wanderlei, 2002, p. 27). 'It is the first experience in Brazil, if there is another in the world, of transforming an infirmary with such promptitude and pertinence that it would become an experiment of contemporaneous psychiatry even before the Psychiatric Reform. Before the Reform, we had already a way of functioning, we had accomplished things that were later developed on the practices of the Caps [Centro de Atenção Psicossocial/Centre of Psychosocial Attention]. And this started off from one infirmary! From the madness of one infirmary! I will have to write about this, because there was no planning for the setting up of the Space Opened to Time, which came about gradually. We didn't want that [the infirmary M1], but we didn't know what it would be turned into; the path was following the wish of the clients'; in the original version, 'É a primeira experiência no Brasil, se é que existe outra no mundo, de transformar uma enfermaria com uma velocidade e pertinência tal que ela viria a ser uma experiência da psiquiatria contemporânea, antes mesmo da chamada Reforma Psiquiátrica. Antes mesmo da Reforma a gente já tinha um funcionamento, já realizava coisas que depois foram desenvolvidas nas práticas dos Caps. E isso a partir de uma enfermaria! A partir da loucura de uma enfermaria! Isso é uma coisa que eu tenho que escrever porque não houve um planejamento para fazer o Espaço Aberto ao Tempo, ele se deu paulatinamente. Aquilo (a enfermaria) nós não queríamos, mas o que viria a ser não sabíamos; o caminho foi seguir o desejo dos clientes'.

(Novoa, 2005)<sup>41</sup>, and where the work of Lygia Clark got inserted on the institutional framework 'of support to the mechanisms against psychosis' (Wanderlei, 2002, p. 27).

Being himself an artist, the successive stages of his experience with the work of Lygia Clark, as well as the shifting of his psychiatric practice, were complemented and, to be sure, propelled by his own artistic work, in particular the *Palavragesto* (*Wordgesture*), in which the concepts behind the terms used in the quotidian of psychiatry were substituted by new senses pointed out by experience (Wanderlei, 2002, p. 26). His refusal of the conventional psychiatric approach met Nise da Silveira's belief that it was possible to relate to madness only by intuition, and she encouraged him to 'take his sensitivity as a working tool' (Novoa, 2005)<sup>42</sup>. With the *Estruturação do Self*, which he did not consider to

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<sup>41</sup> 'It was a project of de-institutionalization that originated inside the very hospital. The idea for the creation of EAT was to fragment all the hospital in small autonomous services that might crop up from any point of that big insane asylum. Afterwards we would have put them on the street within a territorial logic. You fragment completely a macro-hospital so that you can create small institutions within the parameters of contemporaneous psychiatry. This was part of the effort of those experiences that came about at the end of the 80s, prompted by the requests of the clients to change the reductionist psychiatry. Within that continuous transformation we made at the infirmary, the works of Nise da Silveira and Lygia Clark were always on my memory as ideological parameters'; in the original version, 'Foi um projeto de desinstitucionalização que se iniciou de dentro do próprio hospital. A idéia com a criação EAT era de fragmentar todo o hospital em pequenos serviços autônomos que poderiam surgir de qualquer ponto daquele grande e insano manicômio. Depois os colocaríamos na rua dentro de uma lógica territorial. Você fragmenta completamente um macro hospital para depois criar pequenas instituições dentro dos parâmetros de uma psiquiatria contemporânea. Está dentro do esforço daquelas experiências que surgiram no final da década de 80, impulsionada pelo clamor dos clientes em mudar uma psiquiatria reducionista. Nessa transformação contínua que fizemos da enfermaria, os trabalhos da Nise da Silveira e de Lygia Clark sempre tiveram em minha memória como parâmetros ideológicos'.

<sup>42</sup> '... when Nise invited me to come to the Casa das Palmeiras and afterwards to become a doctor there (while she was travelling in Europe and I substituted her), I told her "Nise, it is impossible for me to follow the psychiatric career for two reasons: I have no vocation for that hegemonic thing about the psychiatric knowledge; there is no way I can read a book on psychiatry; it is something that I am not interested in; the theories of the unconscious, either Freudian or Jungian also never interested me. I would study them, but I wasn't interested in them. And she told me: "Take your sensitivity as a working tool". She thought that it was possible to work with madness only with the intuition and sensitivity'; in the original version, '... quando Nise me convidou para eu ir para a Casa das Palmeiras e depois para eu ser médico na Casa das Palmeiras, (quando ela viajou para a Europa eu fiquei no lugar dela por um tempo), eu disse: "Nise, é impossível eu seguir a carreira psiquiátrica por dois motivos: essa coisa hegemônica do saber psiquiátrico eu não tenho vocação; não consigo ler um livro de psiquiatria de jeito nenhum; é uma coisa que não me interessa; as teorias sobre o inconsciente sejam freudiana ou junguiana também



be a psychotherapy, for he 'didn't have control over the process' (Novoa, 2005), Lula Wanderlei learned to read, besides the whole experience in itself, also the way in which the client lived the objects and, thus, lived time and space:

I offer an object, phenomenologically deconstructed so that you can appropriate it and reconstruct it, reconstructing your own body. It is up to the client to do that or not and it is up to me to follow up the construction he makes with that object and if it is valid for him or not (Novoa, 2005)<sup>43</sup>.

The *Estruturação do Self* was in consonance with his uncompromising psychiatric practice:

What I did was to enter the environments of psychiatry and allow myself to be impressed by the clients, at a time when it was forbidden to let yourself be impressed, a neutral view should be developed. I let myself be impressed... an impression that would leave traces and records in me, and from those impressions I would reconfigure myself offering a proposal of reconfiguration to the other. That is the mechanism in which I work and it is purely aesthetical/ethical. (...) You give an answer to the other, from what impresses you in the other. Without any theory, only intuition. Often, you can't even arrange it as scientific knowledge, it is pure intuition. Giving a creative response to suffering is working with the other side of the symptom: the reconstructive force within ourselves. To make a proposal to the other out of chance, in the spur of the moment, is like making a work of art. Some of my interventions would remind artistic performances (Novoa, 2005).

In his assertion of the 'aesthetical/ethical', Lula Wanderlei kept the works of Nise da Silveira and Lygia Clark 'as ideological parameters'<sup>44</sup>, and, while apparently neither of the theories of the unconscious, Junguian or Freudian, was of interest to him, a survey of Nise da Silveira's operative resources to approach

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nunca me interessaram. Eu até estudava, mas não era esse meu interesse. E ela me disse: "Tome a sua sensibilidade como instrumento de trabalho." Ela achava que eu poderia trabalhar com a loucura só com a intuição e sensibilidade'.

<sup>43</sup> 'I also learned through those experiences to make a reading not only of the experience, but also of the living experience of the clients, the way they lived time and space, the objects. (...) I don't consider it psychotherapy, because I don't have control over the process'; in the original version, 'aprendi também através dessas experiências a fazer leituras não só da experiência, mas da vivência dos clientes, o modo deles vivenciarem o tempo e o espaço, os objetos. (...) não considero uma psicoterapia, porque eu não tenho domínio do processo'.

<sup>44</sup> See note 41.

the creative process and its enacting seems likely to provide instrumental knowledge in grasping Lygia Clark's research as well as the outcome of her endeavour.

## SYMBOLIC TRANSFORMATION

Nise da Silveira observed that her schizophrenic patients, in some cases withdrawn from reality for decades, when given the means for plastic expression would convey their inner trials under mythical and archetypal imagery, that is, through primordial images. Not only had the patient's 'creative force' remained unharmed, despite the often severe and long-term alienation of will caused by the flooding of the conscious field with material from the unconscious realm, but it prompted what could only be acknowledged as a process of self-healing. Usually, the first series of images made by the resident presented, in iconographic terms, the emotional situation at the outbreak of the schizophrenic condition, as if inner time had halted at that overwhelming event (Silveira, 2006b, p. 43)<sup>45</sup>. However, the subsequent series would display a remarkable iconographic progression, with the 'appearance of more archaic and more mysterious symbols', which accounted for a distancing from the conscious levels of the psyche, to be sure, but also revealed the 'active presence of reorganizing psychic forces, or self-healing forces' (Silveira, 2005, p. 122)<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> 'The ideas, the affection, that remain domineering during the whole course of the psychotic process, always derive from the situations that absorbed the individual before the illness. It is as if time had stopped'; in the original version: 'As ideias, os afetos, que permanecem dominantes durante todo o curso do processo psicótico, derivam sempre das situações que absorviam o indivíduo antes da doença. É como se o tempo parasse'.

<sup>46</sup> Regarding the presence of self-healing forces, Nise da Silveira writes: 'To the question of knowing whereas this happens frequently I would answer yes, but not always in an evident way

In order to understand this powerful 'symbolic transformation', to determine how it gave evidence of a reconnection with underlying psychic contents, and how it percolated outwardly as a gradual, even if tentative, availability to relate with reality, Nise da Silveira used Jung's formulations of the dynamics of the psyche – the archetypes, the collective unconscious, and the fundamental notion of the symbol as a dynamo, a transformer of psychic energy: 'All psychic processes are of an energetic nature. The *complexes* are knots of energy (...) the *archetypes* are nucleus of energy in a virtual state and the *symbols* are machines that transform energy' (Silveira, 2006b, p. 41)<sup>47</sup>. Nise da Silveira shared Jung's view that psychic energy, or libido, comprised the whole of one's

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(...) This was certainly one of my first amazements, the observation of these self-healing forces' (Silveira, 2005, 122).

<sup>47</sup> Italics are kept as in the original version unless otherwise stated. In the original version: 'Todos os fenómenos psíquicos são de natureza energética. Os *complexos* são nós de energia. (...) os *arquétipos* são núcleos de energia em estado virtual e os *símbolos* são máquinas transformadoras de energia'. After the creation of the Museum of the Unconscious in 1952 and following her deep interest in analytical psychology, Nise da Silveira created with Bandeira de Melo a small group of studies to debate Jung's writings, which later, in April 1955, became the Centre of Studies C. G. Jung. In December 1954 she wrote a letter to Jung, sending him photographs of the mandalas depicted in works made at STOR. This set off her relationship with Jung: from 1957 to 1958, and later on from 1961 to 1962, she studied at the C. G. Jung Institute in Zurich, and would exhibit works made at STOR at the II International Congress of Psychology in 1957. There she was supervised and analysed by Jung's assistant, Marie-Louise Von Franz. While the work of Carl Gustav Jung is unquestionably the most important influence on Nise da Silveira's research, other important references should be briefly mentioned: Antonin Artaud, and his writings and personal testimony of the inner world in a psychiatric condition, on the consequences of violent treatment, preventing self-structuring and self-healing forces from making way; R. D. Laing, and his exploration of the inner world of the psychiatric individual, as essential for the understanding and relieving of that type of condition; the experiments of R. D. Laing, David Cooper, Esterson, in the United Kingdom, and Franco Basaglia, in Italy, of open, ambulatory systems of treatment, compensating for the incapacity of offering favourable conditions on psychiatric hospitals; John L. Perry, H. Prinzhorn, and also Herbert Read, and their valuing and interpretation of images produced by psychiatric patients, as well as Prinzhorn's 'demonstration that a creative drive, an instinctive need of expression, survives the disintegration of the personality' (Silveira, 2006a, p. 88); Gaston Bachelard, who, according to Nise da Silveira, 'opened the way to the research on the psychological importance of the materials' (Gullar, 1996, p. 86), whose studies on the imagination of the materials and elements of the world pointed towards a 'direct ontology' (Bachelard, 1984, p. 2), an epistemology of the creative force, adding to the aim of Nise da Silveira's 'emotion of dealing' in therapeutic artistic activities: 'L'image poétique n'est soumise à une poussée. Elle n'est pas l'écho d'un passé. C'est plutôt l'inverse: par l'éclat d'une image, le passé lointain résonne d'échos et l'on ne voit guère à quelle profondeur ces echos vont se répercuter et s'éteindre. Dans sa nouveauté, dans son activité, l'image poétique a un être propre. Elle relève d'une *ontologie directe*'. Finally, concerning Freud's work, Nise da Silveira argues that his 'concern to translate in rational terms the creations of the imagination, originating from the depths of psyche, on the area of sexuality' had prevented him from carrying on, 'to its utmost consequences', the vastness of his knowledge on Antiquity (Silveira, 2006a, p. 84).

instinctual power including the forces that oppose instinctual impetuosity, and not only, nor mainly, the sexual drive (Jung, 1990, p. 13)<sup>48</sup>. She also shared Jung's reading of the retrograde course of the libido as a useful stage on psychic development, seen as 'inhibition', instead of the Freudian 'repression'. When the demands or obstacles to adapt to reality arrest the outwardly progression of the libido and eventually invert its course, the effect is a reactivation of unconscious contents, energetically charged into the threshold of consciousness. This allows for the ego to confront them and eventually integrate them, doing away with the stagnation and the blockage, and restarting the libido on a new phase of outwardly progression, bearing forward the recently emerged set of new energetic, vital possibilities.

Nise da Silveira also shared Jung's standpoint concerning the 'teleological directedness of everything psychic' (Jung, 1990, p. 3), as well as his conception of the human psychic development, which she summarized as 'transmutations of psychic energy through the formation of new symbols that succeed expired ones, discharged of the energy that previously animated them' (Silveira, 2006b, pp. 43-44)<sup>49</sup>. While the relevance of the role ascribed to the 'symbol' may not seem the foremost distinctive item of Jung's analytical psychology, since the notions of 'archetype', 'archetypal image' or 'primordial image', stand out for his framework of the collective unconscious, it is all the same a comprehensive differentiating factor in relation to Freud's psychoanalysis, considering that both methods of research depend on the renderings of unconscious imagery, their commonest example being the interpretation of dreams. Freud argued that the unconscious

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<sup>48</sup> In Jung's own words, 'affects cannot be identified with sexuality inasmuch as they may easily spring from conflict situations – for instance, many emotions spring from the instinct of self-preservation'.

<sup>49</sup> In the original version: 'É por meio de transmutações de energia psíquica, da formação de símbolos novos sucedendo a símbolos caducos, esvaziados da energia que antes os animava, que

imagery originated upon personal conscious contents, repressed due to their incompatibility with conscious attitude, that emerged under numerous disguising representations, or symbols, altogether referring to a restricted group of themes, such as the individual's body, family relatives, the events of birth, sexuality and death<sup>50</sup>. Conversely, Jung regarded the contents of a personalistic nature as mere signs, conveying primarily a semiotic meaning, and remarked that 'this kind of approach inevitably leads to that "monotony" of interpretation of which Freud himself complained' (Jung, 1990, p. 15). Bearing different conceptions of libido, the two theories present different understandings of the energetic dynamics of the psyche and, therefore, of the range of the unconscious as well as of the dimension of its symbolical renderings. Whereas Freud's assertion of the unconscious as a set of repressed contents, previously conscious and of a personal nature, seemingly defined the 'unconscious psyche as a subliminal appendix to the conscious mind' (Jung, 1990, p. 51), Jung included in the unconscious 'the psychoid functions that are not capable of consciousness and of whose existence we have only indirect knowledge' (Jung, 1990, p. 57). Thus, while Freud would identify archaic imagery with personal infantile repressed material of a sexual nature, Jung would envisage them as 'formative principles of instinctual power' (Jung, 1990, p. 84), inherited means for active imagination, beyond the individual sphere<sup>51</sup>. On this subject, Mircea Eliade explained that to

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se processa, na sua essência, o desenvolvimento da psique do homem'.

<sup>50</sup> Storr, A. ed., 1983, pp. 45-64, in: Jung's involvement with Freud and his divergence from Freud's theories, part 2. *The Essential Jung. Selected Writings*: Princeton: Princeton University Press.

<sup>51</sup> In 1954, in the foreword to the Swiss fourth edition of *Symbols of Transformation* – the text that established the divergence between analytical psychology and psychoanalysis upon different conceptions on the nature of the libido and on the range of the unconscious – Jung pointedly resumes his criticism of Freud's psychoanalysis: 'I am thinking more of the reductive causalism of his whole outlook, and the almost complete disregard of the teleological directedness of everything psychic' (Jung, 1990, p. 3). Jung met personally Freud in Vienna in 1907, a meeting that lasted for 13 hours, in absorbed conversation. In 1910, the International Psychoanalytic Association was founded and Freud used his influence to have Jung elected as its President.

'translate' images into concrete terms is an operation devoid of meaning, for it is the image, for instances 'the Image of the Mother which reveals – and which *alone can reveal* – her reality and her function, at once cosmological, anthropological and psychological'. In opposition to Freud's view, Eliade also remarked that

sexuality never has been "pure", everywhere and always it is a polyvalent function whose primary and perhaps supreme valency is the cosmological function: so that to translate a psychic situation into sexual terms is by no means to belittle it; for, except in the modern world, sexuality has everywhere and always been a hierophany, and the sexual act an integral action (therefore also a means to knowledge).

And he concludes:

If the mind makes use of images to grasp the ultimate reality of things, it is just because reality manifests itself in contradictory ways and therefore cannot be expressed in concepts. (...) It is therefore the image as such, as a whole bundle of meanings, that is *true*, and not any *one* of its meanings, nor one alone of its many frames of reference (Eliade, 1961, pp. 14–15).

Therefore, Freud's understanding of 'symbolization' or 'symbolism' and Jung's understanding of 'symbol' constitute different stances that not only derive from different conceptions of libido, but bear different implications in what concerns psychic human development:

According to Freud, sublimation occurs when the libido abandons the sexually desired object to aim at another goal, a non-sexual one (...) artistic activity would be one of the main ways of sublimation. Under the perspective of Jungian psychology, the libido hardly changes its goal *unless it is transformed*. It is here that the symbolic images take their place, whose function is to promote transformations on the libido (Silveira, 2006a, p. 54)<sup>52</sup>.

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Their relationship lasted until 1912, when the publication of Jung's *Transformations and Symbols of the Libido* not only presented a different concept of libido, but also extended the concept of the unconscious far beyond the personal individualistic biography, settling their final scientific divergence. Nise da Silveira describes it as a "confrontation of opposing cultural phenomena" (Silveira, 2006, p. 15).

<sup>52</sup> On the original version: 'Segundo Freud ocorre sublimação quando a libido abandona o objecto sexualmente desejado para dirigir-se a uma outra meta, não-sexual (...) a actividade artística seria

According to this understanding of the symbolic image, the iconographic progression that takes place within the process of creative depiction enables the leaping onto higher modes of psychic energy, where it becomes possible to have a 'higher quality of existence' (Silveira, 2006a, p. 54)<sup>53</sup>. By being depicted<sup>54</sup>, symbolic images allow for the expression of the unconscious engulfing trial: they defuse the overwhelming power of the contents that originate from that process, and, in this, they allow for a reassessment of those contents, which emerge safely hidden beneath the counter posing, protective and redeeming power of the symbol.

Jung went as far as to say that

every psychic product, if it is the best possible expression at the moment for a fact as yet unknown or only relatively known, may be regarded as a symbol, provided that we accept the expression as standing for something that is only divined and not yet clearly conscious (Jung, 1990, p. 286),

in which case it is a 'living symbol': a process which bears hidden meaning, and which is not merely derived from something but seeks to become something (Jung, 1990, p. 289), compelling the observer's unconscious participation and having a life-giving and life-enhancing effect (Jung, 1990, p. 288). In Jung's

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uma das principais formas de sublimação. Sob a perspectiva da psicologia junguiana, a libido dificilmente troca de meta *se não se transforma*. É aí que tomam lugar as imagens simbólicas, cuja função é promover transformações da libido'.

<sup>53</sup> Nise da Silveira uses this expression recurrently when analysing images of the schizophrenic artists of Engenho de Dentro, by which she means the overcoming of delirious solutions for the tearing inner conflicts: 'By giving shape to the energy transforming symbolic images, which had originated from the process that unfolded in the unconscious, Isaac leaped over to a higher stage, where it was possible to live a different quality of existence. He overcame the level of conflict between intense affections and repressing concepts of honour, and simultaneously, the correspondent compensating attempts of delirious solution. In fact, the delirious theme vanishes completely'; in the original version, 'Dando forma às imagens simbólicas transformadoras de energia, originárias do processo que se desdobrava no inconsciente, Isaac galgou um nível mais alto, onde era possível viver uma outra qualidade de existência'.

<sup>54</sup> The Portuguese verb used by Nise da Silveira to refer to the materialization of an inner image is 'plasmar', meaning to 'mould' or to 'shape'.

opinion, however, whether a thing is a symbol or not depends chiefly on the attitude of the observing consciousness; for instance, on whether it regards a given fact not merely as such but also as an expression for something unknown' (Jung, 1990, p. 287), which he named the 'symbolic attitude'. Accordingly, Mircea Eliade finds in the 'dialectic of the symbol' a

tendency to annexation (...) not merely because every symbolism aims at integrating and unifying the greatest possible number of zones and areas of human and cosmic experience, but also because every symbol tends to identify with itself as many things, situations and modes of existence as it can (...) this unification is in no sense a confusion; the symbolism makes it possible to move from one level to another, and one mode of existence to another, bringing them together, but never merging them (Eliade, 1971, p. 452).

Furthermore, Jung argued that the products that compel a symbolic interpretation 'never have an exclusively conscious or an exclusively unconscious source, but arise from an equal collaboration of both' (Jung, 1990, p. 288), adding that

the living symbol cannot come to birth in a dull or poorly developed mind, for such a mind will be content with the already existing symbols offered by established tradition. Only the passionate yearning of a highly developed mind for which the traditional symbol is no longer the unified expression of the rational and the irrational, of the highest and the lowest, can create a new symbol (...) it cannot be a onesided product of the most highly differentiated mental functions but must derive from the lowest and most primitive levels of the psyche.

#### Bearing

an extremely complex nature, since data from every psychic function have gone into its making (...) the profundity and pregnant significance of the symbol appeal just as strongly to *thinking* as to *feeling*, while its peculiar plastic imagery, when shaped into sensuous form, stimulates *sensation* as much as *intuition* (Jung, 1990, p. 289-290)<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Jung is referring to the four functions of adaptation that the individual uses to acknowledge the outer world and relate with it – *thinking*, *feeling*, *sensation* and *intuition*. They constitute two pairs of opposites, *intuition* opposing *sensation* and *thinking* opposing *feeling*. Jung postulated that each individual develops predominantly one of the functions, which becomes the 'main function', and also tends to relinquish one of the functions, leaving it utterly unconscious, to become an



Nise da Silveira's method of analysis of the creative production of her patients aimed at interpreting the stages of the psychic process that unfolds with the retrieval of the creative drive, and comprised two fundamental aspects: taking the creative labour as a whole and using the 'language of mythology' to read it. Concerning the first aspect, Nise da Silveira points out the importance of observing the patients' actions during their creative process at the studio in order to relate 'the emotional situation lived' by the patient with 'the images that emerge from the unconscious' (Silveira, 2006, p. 18)<sup>56</sup>, which should be taken as series:

Paintings of the same author, as dreams, when examined as series, reveal the repetition of motifs and the existence of a continuity on the flux of images from the unconscious. It is not rare to verify that those series contain significations parallel to mythical themes" (Silveira, 2006, p. 18)<sup>57</sup>.

Concerning the second aspect, Nise da Silveira declared:

The person [the schizophrenic] that brusquely enters a confusing mythical world is more apt to understand the different languages of that universe than the language of rational interpretations. It is convenient that the therapist has an earnest inclination to study the different expressions of the mythological language in order to speak the same language as the patient (Silveira, 2005, p. 127),

and she specifies that this 'tool of daily use, indispensable to the psychiatrist' should include the 'knowledge of mythology, history of religions, philosophy and

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'inferior function'. If one of the functions is not used, there is the danger that it escapes conscious management, becoming autonomous and causing an abnormal psychic activation. Therefore, due to its connection with the unconscious, the inferior function can be used therapeutically to bridge the gap between conscious and unconscious (Jung, 1990, pp. 48-49).

<sup>56</sup> 'The task of the therapist is to establish connection between the images that emerge from the unconscious and the emotional situation lived by the individual'; in the original version: 'A tarefa do terapeuta será estabelecer conexões entre as imagens que emergem do inconsciente e a situação emocional vivida pelo indivíduo'.

<sup>57</sup> In the original version: 'Pinturas de um mesmo autor, tal como os sonhos, se examinadas em séries, revelam a repetição de motivos e a existência de uma continuidade no fluxo de imagens do inconsciente. Não raro verifica-se que essas séries contêm significações paralelas a temas míticos'.

psychology of primitive peoples' (Silveira, 2005, p. 88).

In accordance with Jung, Nise da Silveira confirms that

the invasion of the field of consciousness by contents from the collective unconscious, in order to compensate or bring archaic responses for the present drama that the person is living, is one of the processes that imposes itself in an unquestionable way (Silveira, 2005, p. 90).

And, in Jung's own words, within the relations of the ego with the unconscious, the processes of the collective unconscious are concerned not only with the more or less personal relations of an individual to his family or to a wider social group, but with his relations to society and to the human community in general (Jung, 1990, p. 153). Notorious in the majority of the cases presented by Nise da Silveira, this becomes clear in the work of Octavio Ignacio, a patient strained by an unconscious conflict between instinctive homosexual drives and equally instinctive opposing inhibition drives. The sequence of his drawings and paintings exemplifies the iconographic progression towards deeper layers of the collective unconscious, presenting an array of primordial images, or archetypal images, related in a way that is coherent with Jung's definition:

I call the image *primordial* when it possesses an *archaic* character. I speak of its archaic character when the image is in striking accord with familiar mythological motifs. It then expresses material primarily derived from the collective unconscious, and indicates at the same time that the factors influencing the conscious situation of the moment are collective rather than personal (Jung, 1990, p. 263).

The iconographic progression in the work of Octavio Ignacio evolves from the straightforward icons of the man and the horse, depicting amputation, sacrifice and crucifixion, which stand for the Christian dichotomy between nature (instinct) and spirit (reason), the horse being an outstanding symbol of sexually driven instinctual force. It proceeds to the mythical Ancient references

of the Centaurs and of Pegasus, depicting flight and ascension (elevating the instinctual power into higher planes of existence), followed by the archaic Chthonic character of the bipedal-winged-horse/psychopomp (performing or leading the ascension). It further evolves to syncretic icons, primary concise symbols such as winged phalluses, winged vases and, finally, double-headed winged vessels, all bringing forth the archetypal image of the 'conjunction of opposites' – the reminder of the hidden, embodied information which tells of the extraordinary force related with that accomplishment – therefore, extremely potent images, redeeming and also empowering, due to that underlying creative and self-determining assertiveness that both forms and prompts them.

#### THE ARCHETYPAL IMAGE OF THE CONJUNCTION OF THE OPPOSITES

Octavio Ignacio was admitted at the Engenho de Dentro in 1950 and thereafter subjected to 11 successive readmissions, yet readmitted only once since he started painting in 1966. At the studio, when requested to speak about his images, he would sometimes issue short comments (inserted besides the corresponding images, illustrations 1 to 21).

His work set off with the iconographic subjects of the man and the horse, the first series of images depicting animal sacrifice and limb amputation, equivalent to the immolation of the forces of all instinctive life, which culminated with a supreme sacrifice, the crucifixion of the animal, equivalent to a ripping apart by the two opposing poles, nature and spirit, according to Christian culture. The ambivalence between man (rider) and horse (illus. 1 to 8), in a series of images enlightened with comments by the author, evolves to the depiction of a

Centaur with bow and arrow (illus. 8), into a deeper level of the unconscious, encompassing the 'transfer of energy from a psychic level to another' (Silveira, 2005, p. 116). This made way for the appearance of wings (illus. 10 to 21), a progression into the subjects of Pegasus, of flight and of ascension, equivalent to the ability to

break-out from a situation that has become "locked" or "petrified", a rupture of the plane which makes it possible to pass from one mode of being into another, liberty "of movement", freedom to change the situation, to abolish a conditioning system' (Eliade, 1960, pp. 118-119).

These subjects brought to the depiction of a bipedal winged horse holding a sceptre and climbing up between two steps, a fantastic being that, according to Nise da Silveira, assumes the function of psychopomp, leading the way to a different level of existence (illus. 12 to 15). Nise da Silveira refers the function of the psychopomp as leading the souls of the dead to the Underworld, in which case the character depicted by Octavio Ignacio would have to be *descending* and not *ascending* the steps, facing upwards, as it seems to be case. We interpret the 'fantastic being' as the pre-figuration of a shaman, whose function is either to descend to the Underworld (psychopomp) or to ascend to Heaven, respectively leading the dead or the living, and apparently, in this case, leading Octavio Ignacio's 'life force' or 'life energy' to a higher level, closer to Heaven, that is, to a better quality of existence<sup>58</sup>.

In parallel with the series of the winged horse, Octavio developed another series setting off from the theme of the winged phallus (illus. 16), the first image of the series depicting a standing man bearing a winged phallus and sided by a syringe with the needle pointing upward. Nise da Silveira reads this image

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<sup>58</sup> See note 53.

through the Hindu traditional knowledge of Yôga, using its system of the energetic body, or pranic system (the system of subtle conduits where the *prāna*, or bio-energy, flows)<sup>59</sup>. The pranic system comprises numerous energetic centres, or *chakras*, bearing 7 main *chakras*<sup>60</sup> (fig. 20): the *mūlādhāra chakra*, at the basis of the vertebral column; the *swādhīsthāna chakra*, at the height of the organs of reproduction; the *manipura chakra*, at the height of the stomach; the *anāhata chakra*, at the height of the heart; the *vishuddha chakra*, at the basis of the neck; the *ajña chakra*, on the space between the eyebrows; and the *sahāsrara chakra*, at the top of the head. In Octavio's image, by their location, the winged phallus and the syringe respectively account for the *swādhīsthāna chakra*, the energetic centre associated with the reproductive organs, and for the *kundalinī* energy, the primordial creative force, residing at the basis of the spine, that Octavio figured by its injection-like dynamic of ascension, depicting the syringe on a vertical position, the needle pointing up, which also may account for the 'power of self-healing', or a 'dynamics of self-healing'. Silveira identifies the site of the 'winged phallus' with the *mūlādhāra chakra*, but, in fact, the latter does not correspond to the reproductive organs but to the dwelling of the *kundalinī* energy, at the basis of the spine. The reproductive organs, on their turn, are associated with the *swādhīsthāna chakra*, the second *chakra* on the ascending sequence of the *seven* main *chakras* of the bio-energetic (*pranic*) system. Octavio structured this drawing within a grid, in which it is possible to identify the different heights respectively of the winged phallus (at the site of the reproductive organs, thus,

<sup>59</sup> *Prāna* is the Sanskrit word for biological energy. On the energetic body, *prāna* flows along the *nāḍīs*, that is, the energetic conduits or energetic meridians. In Sanskrit, *nāḍa* means 'sound, river', and *nāḍīs* means 'rivers', as well as 'crier', 'caller'.

<sup>60</sup> '*Chakra* means wheel or circle. *Chakras* are the centres of collection, stocking and distribution of *prāna*, the vital energy. They are called wheels or circles because they are vortexes of energy – and, therefore, circular – localised on the confluences and bifurcations of the *nāḍīs* or meridians'. (DeRose, 2007, p. 625.)

the *swādhsthāna chakra*) and the basis of the syringe's piston (at the basis of the column, thus, the *mūlādhāra chakra*, the site where in fact the *kundalinī* energy resides). The winged phallus is itself encapsulated within a grid, forcefully contained, giving evidence to a restraining of the overrated, yet raw, sexual impulse<sup>61</sup>.

A series of images of winged syringes followed (illus. 17), evolving to depictions of winged serpents (illus. 18), or feathered serpents, which arguably represent the ascensional power of the *kundalinī*. In the eastern tradition, the ascension of the *kundalinī* (also known as *bhujanginī*, i. e., *naja*, snake) is the

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<sup>61</sup> We find in this detail, significantly encompassing the theme of the ascension of the *kundalinī*, the annunciation of the theme of the conjunction of the opposites such as it is sought in the Tantric tradition: 'the tantrist is concerned with *sādhana* [practice]; he wants to "realize" the paradox expressed in all images and formulas concerning the union of opposites, he wants concrete, experimental knowledge of the state of non-duality (...) on whatever plane it is realized, the conjunction of opposites represents a transcending of the phenomenal world, abolishment of all experience of duality. (...) the adept works to obtain immobility of breath and semen; there is even supposed to be a return of semen – that is, a paradoxical act, impossible to execute in a "normal" physiological context dependent upon a "normal" cosmos; in other words, the "return of semen" stands, on the physiological plane, for a transcendence of the phenomenal world, entrance into freedom. This is but one application of what is termed "going against the current" (*ujāna sādhana*), or of the regressive process (...) implying a complete "inversion" of all psycho-physiological processes (...) For one who realizes them, this "return", this "regression" imply destruction of the cosmos and hence "emergence from time", entrance into "immortality" (...) Immortality cannot be gained except by arresting manifestation, and hence the process of disintegration; one must proceed against the current (*ujāna sādhana*) and once again find the primordial, motionless Unity, which existed before the rupture (...) to arrest respiration, suspend thought, immobilize the semen – these are only formulas expressing the same paradox of the abolishment of time. We have noted that every effort to transcend the cosmos is preceded by a long process of cosmicizing the body and the psychomental life, for it is from a perfect cosmos that the *yogin* sets out to transcend the cosmic condition' (Eliade, 1990, pp. 269-271). The concrete experimental techniques that reverse the psycho-physiological processes make use of *bandhas* (compression of plexuses, glands and internal organs) and retentions of breath, among others. The *bandhas* 'produce a kind of inversion of the natural energetic streams of the body. The usually descending stream (*apāna*) that flows from the middle to the basis of the body, and presides the functions of excretion, is forced (...) to rise. The usually ascending energy (*prāna*) that governs the upper part of the body, which escapes from the top, is forced (...) to descend' (Michaël, 1980, p. 204). The retention of breath 'produces a sort of suppression of all the vital and mental energies. (...) It produces a sort of inner breathing, explained by the fact that the vital functions (*prāna*) no longer operate on a dual mode, by *idā* and *pingalā*, but by the central channel, the middle via, *sushumnā* (Michaël, 1980, p. 205). The technique that allows the return of semen, aspirated by suction through the spermatoc channel, inverts the usually descending course of the energy: 'the seed (*bindu*) that is elaborated on the genital organs, at the level of the *mūlādhāra chakra*, is not but a material, rough form of the causal *bindu* or creative energy present on the superior centres of the head. It is the influence of thought, the vacillation of desire, which makes the bind descend to the inferior centres. The goal is to make this rough seed to return to its original subtle form, to reconvert it into nectar, bringing it in the ascending movement towards the summit of the skull, represented by the re-ascending way, *sushumnā*' (Michaël, 1980,

psycho-physiological process by which the *yôgins* develop the several energetic centres or *chakras*, with the aim of attaining *samádhi*, hyper-consciousness or self-knowledge, thus transcending profane reality and its duality<sup>62</sup>. The *kundaliní* is a 'physical energy, of neurologic nature and sexual manifestation' (DeRose, 2007, p. 654) (fig. 20). Its polarity is negative, attribute of the feminine principle and, to repeat, the *kundaliní* is coiled in the *múládhára chakra*, the root energetic centre at the basis of the spine. While the concepts of libido (by Freud and by Jung) and orgone (by Wilhelm Reich) are not far 'from the anatomy and principle of the *kundaliní*', in the absence of concrete experimentation they remain an assemblage of theories (DeRose, 2007, p. 649). On the experimental approach, through concrete psycho-physiological techniques, the procedures to awaken the *kundaliní* consist in uncoiling it and channelling it upwards into the brain through the central nervous system – through the *sushumná*, the subtle conduit inside the vertebral column – in the previously mentioned accurate 'injection-like dynamic'. This process comprises the balancing of the two physical energetic polarities (in the pranic or bio-psycho-energetic system, *idá* and *pingalá*, subtle conduits). Traditional non-Hindu and historically more recent graphic representations of these three subtle conduits are found in the Greek-Roman herald's wand of Caduceus of Hermes or Mercury, associated with healing, as

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p. 210).

<sup>62</sup> The concrete experimental techniques which awaken the *kundaliní* also make use of *bandhas* and breathing exercises in order to 'reach the same result: a forceful arrest of the activity of the vital and mental energies on the plane of duality, and their reflux to the central via, where the ignition is produced (...) The reunification within oneself, or reduction by force to the unique principle of which they are not but a polarization, of the dual alternating energies, such as inhalation and exhalation, *prána* and *apána*, feminine principle and masculine principle, *idá* and *pingalá*, left and right, lunar stream and solar stream, etc., accomplished with their assimilation at the middle via, *sushumná*, the point of equilibrium being as difficult to maintain as standing over a razor's edge. Then, the "state of death" appears, due to the inactivity of the *prána* on the left and right channels, *idá* and *pingalá*' (Michaël, 1980, p. 211-212); 'Normally the *prána* rises and descends along the *nádís idá* and *pingalá* and the other *nádís*. The purpose of all of the methods consists in emptying these *nádís* of their *prána* and leaving them "dead". The *prána* is forced to pass through the central *nadí*, *sushumná*, thus awakening the *kundaliní*. (...) the outcome [of the

well as in the Grail vessel (DeRose, 2007, pp. 657-662).

The syringes and its complex of meanings, in our interpretation of Octavio Ignacio's icons, are prefigured on the arch and bow of the Centaur and on the sceptre of the psychopomp. According to Nise da Silveira's interpretation, Octavio Ignacio's winged vases may be seen as prefiguring the Hindu *yônt-linga* icon, which combines the female and the male principles through a synthesis of concise representations of both sexual organs. The Hindu *yônt-linga*, that also stands for the divine couple Shiva-Shakti (consciousness-matter), represents the 'conjunction of the opposites' attained with the rise of this force (*kundalini*), the extraordinary accomplishment of overpowering duality and transcending profane reality. The subject of the conjunction of the opposites becomes more explicit with the series of images of the double-headed bird (illus. 20 and 21), depicting two heads respectively on top of two symmetric wings. Nise da Silveira reads these icons according to the alchemical iconography, as a representation of the hermaphrodite (Siveira, 2005, p. 122), the 'complete individual' of Ancient mythology, whereas the Hindu tradition informs us not only of the Ardhanari, the first anthropomorphic aspect of Shiva, with the right side male and the left side female, whose burning radiance was terrible to behold<sup>63</sup>, but also of the

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methods] is that they artificially provoke the "inverted course" of the *prāna*' (Rivière, 1993, p. 92).

<sup>63</sup> The symbolism of the Ardhanari can be further understood within the context of the Sāmkhya philosophy, the theoretical counterpart of Yôga in the Hindu traditional philosophical set of the six *dārshanas*, or 'points of view' (which also include the Vêdānta and its counterpart Pūrva Mimansā, and the Nyāya and its counterpart Vaishêshika). According to the Sāmkhya naturalist philosophy, every cosmic manifestation is founded upon the fundamental duality between the *Pūrusha*, the transcendent principle, represented as masculine, and the *Prakriti*, the primordial substance, represented as feminine. While the *Pūrusha*, the principle of consciousness (which is neither creation nor creator, which bears no attributes nor qualities, and which resides in the core of everything yet remaining external), is beyond both the non-manifest and the manifest, the *Prakriti* can either remain undifferentiated, resting in its natural state, the equilibrium of the union of the opposites that precedes manifestation and follows dissolution within each creative cycle, or, under the non-active influence, contact or proximity of the *Pūrusha*, the *Prakriti* can become manifest, creating universes. This duality exists only in relation with the manifest and, as a polarization, it represents the first division within an original whole, giving an account of the aim to produce the multiplicity of the manifest, thus bearing a cosmogonic reach. The



Gandabhêrunda, the double-headed bird believed to possess magnificent strength. Regardless of what may be figured from this polarity, the matter of fact in Octavio Ignacio's progressive descent into deeper layers of the collective unconscious is that it gives an account not only of the cleavage of the psyche but also of the process that 'promotes the reconciliation of the warring opposites' (Silveira, 2005, p. 122).

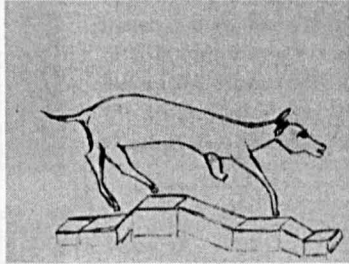
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cosmogonic status of the Ardhanara, anthropomorphized and half-masculine/half-feminine, reveals complementary aspects in the cosmogonic myth of the Original Being whose sacrificial dismembering, *in initio tempore*, gave birth to the multiplicity of the cosmos (Michaël, 1980, p. 35-39). The cosmological duality *Prakriti/Pûrusha*, westernized as the opposition matter/spirit, or nature/spirit, or the split instinct/reason, is explained by Mircea Eliade in terms that parallel with the Jungian formulation of the psycho-biological complementarity instinct/archetype (for Jung, on the spectrum of colours, the instinct stands at the red extreme while the archetype stands at the blue extreme) and Jung's perspective of the teleological course of psychic energy and the exchange consciousness/unconscious: 'In India a whole literature has been devoted to explanations of this paradoxical relationship between what is pre-eminently unconscious – Matter – and "pure consciousness", the Spirit, which by its own mode of being is a-temporal, free, uninvolved in the becoming. And one of the most unexpected results of this philosophic labour has been the conclusion that the Unconscious (i. e. *Prakriti*), moving by a kind of "teleological instinct", imitates the behaviour of the Spirit [*Pûrusha*]; that the unconscious behaves in such a way that its activity seems to *prefigure* the mode of being of the Spirit' (Eliade, 1977, p. 122).



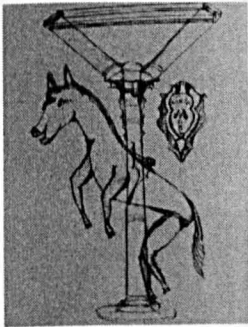
**Illus. 1**

'Man can often be manipulative, in order to see if the animal is obedient or not. Over there is the place for the sacrifice of the horse' (Silveira, 2005, p. 110).



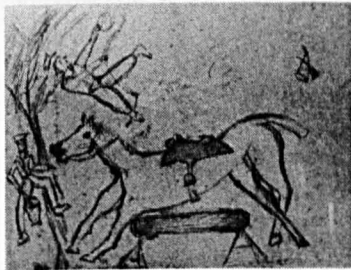
**Illus. 2 and 3**

'We often lose a leg and are as agile as if we had both legs. We don't lose our own essence, we start living with the biology of the animal' (Silveira, 2005, p. 110).



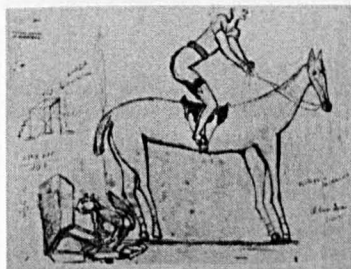
**Illus. 4**

'How could they forget that Christ also descends from the animal? It is in our own flesh that we feel the value of the animal' (Silveira, 2005, p. 112).



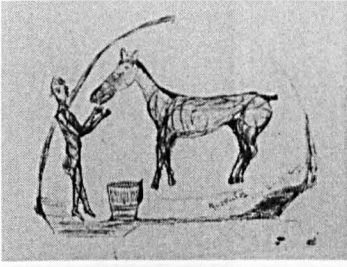
**Illus. 5**

'During the moments in which we don't go further, in which we are ill, it's the horse that's on top' (Silveira, 2005, p. 113).



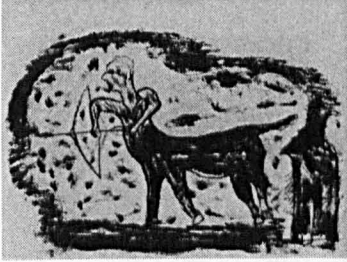
**Illus. 6**

'That's the good position. One has to dominate the horse with the spirit and not by force' (Silveira, 2005, p. 114).



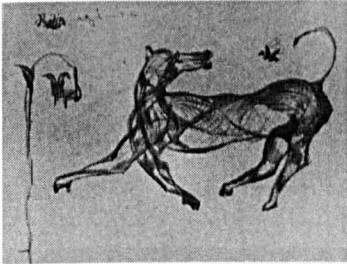
**Illus. 7**

'Man will never be stronger than the horse. Not that the horse can't be tamed. But in the war or on a battle, the horse proves to be stronger than man. Therefore, man should talk with the horse and look after him so that they become friends, because man always has a horse' (Silveira, 2005, p. 114).



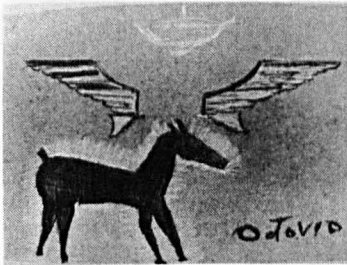
**Illus. 8**

'When we're afraid of the animal, it's him who dominates us. The upper part is man, thought, and the lower part is animal. A half of the heart is man, the other half animal. Man shoots an arrow, he wounds, or it is him who gets hurt. He subdues the character of the beast. He hasn't the right to be as the animal. He doesn't supplant the force of the animal, of my friend or my enemy the animal. It is the rider that must guide' (Silveira, 2005, p. 114).



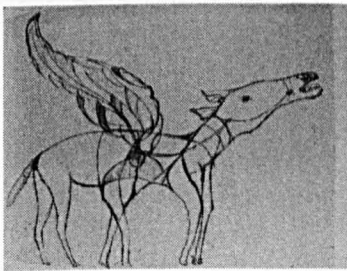
**Illus. 9**

'The art of the animal playing with the bird. The horse plays a lot. When he dances it's because he's already better' (Silveira, 2005, p. 116).



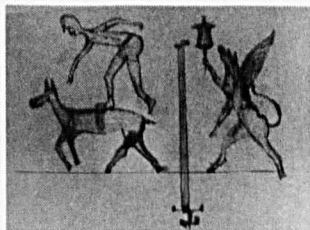
**Illus. 10**

'It's not easy to put wings on the animal. The wing means that the animal is a medium' (Silveira, 2005, p. 116).

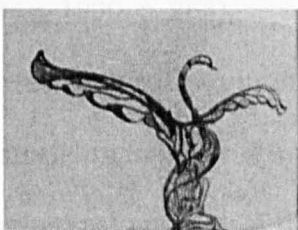
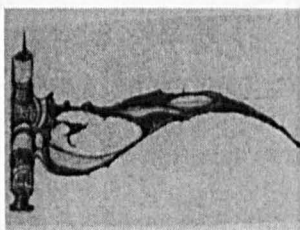
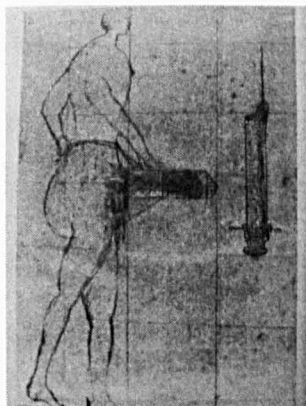
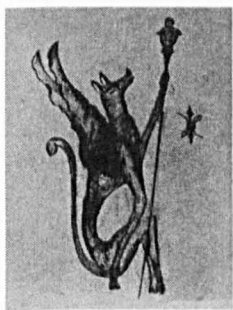


**Illus. 11**

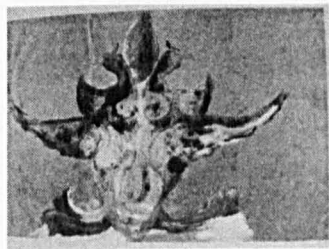
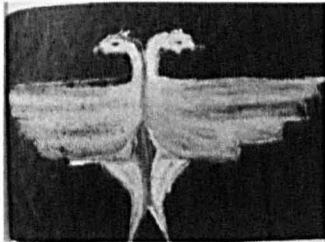
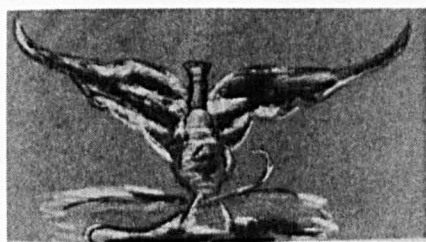
'If we strongly encourage the animal, he can gain wings. It's difficult but not impossible. It's as the rib of Adam' (Silveira, 2005, p. 116).



**Illus. 12, 13, 14 and 15**



Illus. 16, 17 and 18



Illus. 19, 20 and 21

## NUMINOSITY AND THE ARCHETYPE, INDIVIDUATION AND THE SYMBOL

This iconographic progression and its outcome reveal the process through which a virtual primordial energetic structure, an archetype, is brought forward as a primordial image. Through the symbolic transformation enabled by plastic depiction, it becomes manifest and, in this case, perhaps even amplified due to the psychotic condition; how it emerges as an organizing force, 'a self-activating organism, "endowed with generative power"' (Jung, 1990, p. 265), simultaneously counter-posing the pressure exerted by conscious information, and clarifying the engulfment in unconscious material that, in equal intensity, compensated for that pressure. Moreover, the archetypal imagery of the 'conjunction of the opposites' that comes out from this analysis resonates with the fundamental items of an experimental, embodied, core knowledge, an embedded information that concerns the 'libido', as well as the psycho-physiological and bio-energetic dual polarity of its environment, and the unifying ascensional power of its ulterior dynamics or teleology.

As a mythological motif, that is,

a continually effective and recurrent expression that reawakens certain psychic experiences or else formulates them in an appropriate way [for the psychic moment] (Jung, 1990, p. 263),

the primordial image allows for a view of how the material that emerges from the deepest layers of the collective unconscious

can be conceived as a mnemonic deposit, an imprint or engram, which has arisen through the condensation of countless processes of a similar kind (Jung, 1990, p. 263),

as an 'inherited organization of psychic energy, an ingrained system, which not only gives expression to the energetic process but facilitates its operation' (Jung,

1990, p. 265). In his definition of archetype, or primordial image, Jung further describes it as a counterpart for instinct:

[the primordial image] shows how the energetic process has run its unvarying course from time immemorial, while simultaneously allowing a perpetual repetition of it by means of an apprehension or psychic grasp of situations so that life can continue into the future. It is thus the necessary counterpart of instinct, which is a purposive mode of action presupposing an equally purposive and meaningful grasp of the momentary situation. This apprehension is guaranteed by the pre-existent primordial image. It represents the practical formula without which the apprehension of a new situation would be impossible (Jung, 1990, p. 265).

Cumulatively, the specific primordial image of the 'conjunction of the opposites' gives an account of the complementarity between instinct and archetype. In fact, according to Jung,

psyche is made up of processes whose energy springs from the equilibrium of all kinds of opposites. The spirit/instinct antithesis is only one of the commonest formulations, but it has the advantage of reducing the greatest number of the most important and the most complex psychic processes to a common denominator (Jung, 1990, p. 79).

It is important to clarify that, by 'spiritual', Jung refers to 'something more than the intellect' (Jung, 1990, p. 55). The term 'spiritual' must be understood within the description of psychic processes as having a 'lower part', associated with an 'organic substrate', physiological and instinctual, and an 'upper part', associated with 'will' and the loss of the compulsive dynamics of the instinct. Jung went as far as to say that

all unconscious functioning has the automatic character of an instinct, and that the instincts are always coming into collision or, because of their compulsiveness, pursuing their courses unaltered by any influence even under conditions that may positively endanger the life of the individual (Jung, 1990, p. 82).

Thus, according to him,

differentiation of function<sup>64</sup> from compulsive instinctuality, and its voluntary application, are of paramount importance in the maintenance of life (...) in the psychic sphere the will influences function<sup>65</sup>. It does this by virtue of the fact that it is itself a form of energy and has the power to overcome another form (Jung, 1990, p. 54).

And Jung adds:

“will” implies a certain amount of energy freely disposable by the psyche. There must be such amounts of disposable libido (or energy), or modifications of the functions<sup>66</sup> would be impossible (Jung, 1990, p. 55).

Therefore, while the ‘motivation of the will’ must be regarded in the first place as essentially biological, at the upper limit of the psyche, where the function (whether thinking, feeling, sensation or intuition) breaks free from its original goal, the instincts lose their influence as movers of the will:

Just as, in its lower reaches, the psyche loses itself in the organic-material substrate, so in its upper reaches it resolves itself into a “spiritual” form about which we know as little as we do about the functional basis of instinct (Jung, 1990, p. 55).

Among psychic dualities, then,

archetype and instinct are the most polar opposites imaginable. (...) They belong together as correspondences, which is not to say that the one is derivable from the other, but that they subsist side by side as reflections in our own minds of the opposition that underlies all psychic energy (Jung, 1990, p. 78).

Nise da Silveira sums up her empiric view of the correlation between archetypal images and instincts:

there are no amorphous instincts, each instinct develops its action according to a corresponding typical image. Why, then, leave out the observation of the archaic impulses that frequently enough emerge in psychosis and thus apprehend the images with which they are

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<sup>64</sup> See note 55.

<sup>65</sup> See note 55.

<sup>66</sup> See note 55.

intertwined, images that constitute the key to the psychotic situation of each patient? (Gullar, 1996, p. 87)

In fact, according to Jung,

the realization and assimilation of instinct never takes place (...) by absorption into the instinctual sphere<sup>67</sup>, but only through integration of the image which signifies and at the same time evokes the instinct, although in a form quite different from the one we meet on the biological level (Jung, 1990, p. 83).

Therefore, the archetype, as an image of instinct, 'is a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives' (Jung, 1990, p. 84). As it were, plastic depiction enables the emergence of symbols, and, as dynamos, as transformers of energy, these appear to be operating the fundamental dynamics of the psyche: transmuting biological energy from its raw manifest organic instinctuality into fine virtual psychic elaborations, that is, transmuting instincts into archetypes.

The archetypes are condensations<sup>68</sup> of the flow of vital power while also embedding the process by which they become condensations. In this, they constitute simultaneously formulas, that is, fundamental images, and structures, that is, matrixes for imagining, for the creation of images under various typical configurations. The archetype is, thus, a 'formative principle of instinctual power' (Jung, 1990, p. 84). Because the archetype

does not appear, in itself, to be capable of reaching consciousness (...) the archetypal representations [images and ideas] mediated to us by the unconscious should not be confused with the archetype as such. They are very varied structures which all point back to one essentially 'irrepresentable' basic form (Jung, 1990, p. 85).

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<sup>67</sup> 'Absorption into the instinctual sphere, therefore, does not and cannot lead to conscious realization and assimilation of instinct, because consciousness struggles in a regular panic against being swallowed up in the primitivity and unconsciousness of sheer instinctuality' (Jung, 1990, p. 84).

<sup>68</sup> Jung uses the term 'condensation' thus explaining its sense: 'The primordial image is thus a condensation of the living process. It gives a co-ordinating and coherent meaning both to sensuous and to inner perceptions, which at first appear without order or connection, and in this way frees psychic energy from its bondage to sheer uncomprehended perception' (Jung, 1990, p.



Thus, Jung considered them the unborn language of the deeper structure of the psyche, and Nise da Silveira saw them as the 'roots of psychic life, the source of all creative imagination' (Silveira, 2006a, p. 86). As a part of the deeper structure of the psyche,

archetypes, so far as we can observe and experience them at all, manifest themselves only through their ability to organize ideas and images, and this is only an unconscious process which can not be detected until afterwards (Jung, 1990, p. 103).

Among Jung's considerations about the unconscious and its part in human development, one is particularly foreseeing:

Since it is highly probable that we are still a long way from the summit of absolute consciousness, presumably everyone is capable of a wider consciousness, and we may assume accordingly that the unconscious processes are constantly supplying us with contents which, if consciously recognized, would extend the range of consciousness (Jung, 1990, p. 157)<sup>69</sup>.

Most importantly, the archetype is an attractor:

The energy peculiar to the archetype is normally not sufficient to raise it to consciousness. For this, it needs a definite quantum of energy flowing into the unconscious from consciousness, whether because consciousness is not using this energy or because the archetype attracts it to itself' (Jung, 1990, p. 91, note 124).

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264).

<sup>69</sup> Moreover, Jung identifies the unconscious with the 'sympathetic system': 'the unconscious is the psyche that reaches down from the daylight of mentally and morally lucid consciousness into the nervous system that for ages has been known as the "sympathetic". This does not govern perception and muscular activity like the cerebrospinal system, and thus control the environment; but, though functioning without sense-organs, it maintains the balance of life and, through the mysterious paths of the sympathetic excitation, not only gives us knowledge of the innermost life of other beings but also has an inner effect upon them. In this sense, it is an extremely collective system, the operative basis of all *participation mystique*, whereas the cerebrospinal function reaches its high point in separating off the specific qualities of the ego, and only apprehends surfaces and externals – always through the medium of space. It experiences everything as an outside, whereas the sympathetic system experiences everything as an inside' (Jung, 1990, p. 315). Jung derived the term *participation mystique* from Lévy-Bruhl, 'a peculiar kind of psychological connection with objects, and consists in the fact that the object cannot clearly distinguish himself from the object but is bound to it by a direct relationship which amounts to partial identity' (Jung, 1990, p. 273).

Jung finds in this attractive factor an aspect of 'numinosity'<sup>70</sup>,

a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness (Jung, 1990, p. 489),

and he adds:

numinosity, however, is wholly outside conscious volition, for it transports the subject into a state of rapture, which is a state of will-less surrender (Jung, 1990, p. 58).

As it were, 'the archetypes have, when they appear, a distinctly numinous character' (Jung, 1990, p. 76) and,

as a numinous factor, the archetype determines the nature of the configurational process and the course it will follow, with seeming foreknowledge (Jung, 1990, p. 81).

Hence,

as well as being an image in its own right, it is at the same time a dynamism which makes itself felt in the numinosity and fascinating power of the archetypal image (Jung, 1990, p. 83).

Jung envisages the symbol as a 'mediatory product' resulting from the tension of an actual opposition between states, thesis and antithesis (Jung, 1990, p. 290-291), and the formation of the symbol as central to the so-called 'process of individuation'. Jung translates individuation as "coming to selfhood" or "self-realization", self-realization standing in opposition to self-alienation (Jung, 1990, p. 147), and as 'the better and more complete fulfilment of the collective qualities

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<sup>70</sup> Jung asserts the term *numinosity* as follows: 'Religion, as the Latin word denotes, is a careful and scrupulous observation of what Rudolf Otto aptly termed the *numinosum*, that is, a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will. (...) The *numinosum* – whatever its cause may be – is an experience of the subject independent of his will. (...) The *numinosum* is either a quality belonging to a visible object or the influence of an invisible presence that causes a peculiar alteration of consciousness. (...) Religion appears to be a peculiar attitude of mind which could be formulated in accordance with the original use of the word *religio*, which means a careful consideration and observation of certain dynamic factors that are conceived as "powers" (...) We might say, then, that the term 'religion' designates the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been changed by the experience of the *numinosum*' (Jung, 1990, p. 489-

of the human being' (Jung, 1990, p. 148)<sup>71</sup>. Jung also explains that the aim of the process of individuation is 'to divest the self of the false wrappings of the persona on the one hand, and of the suggestive power of primordial images on the other' (Jung, 1990, p. 148). Jung describes the latter as 'subtle inner processes which invade the conscious mind with such suggestive force' (Jung, 1990, p. 149), but without a direct external factor to completely justify it and, thus, more aptly justifiable by subjective inner causes. They have the peculiarity of being unconscious in the first place and of reaching consciousness only gradually, and the moment of their irruption can be very sudden. Given that 'psychological events are never sudden', as Jung remarks, 'the irruption has been preparing for many years, often for half a lifetime' (Jung, 1990, p. 149). According to Jung, these unconscious processes have not only a compensatory role before the conscious mind, but also a complementary one, in order to form a totality that is the self, which is 'a quantity supraordinate to the conscious ego' (Jung, 1990, p. 151). Jung calls the self 'supraordinate' because 'however much we may make conscious there will always exist an indeterminate and indeterminable amount of unconscious material which belongs to the totality of the self' (Jung, 1990, p. 151).

When dealing with the 'suggestive power of the primordial images', as Jung put it,

the complications arising at this stage are no longer egotistic wish-conflicts, but difficulties that concern others as much as oneself. At

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<sup>71</sup> 'Individuation is a natural necessity inasmuch as its prevention by a levelling down of collective standards is injurious to the vital activity of the individual. (...) As the individual is not just a single, separate being, but by his very existence presupposes a collective relationship, it follows that the process of individuation must lead to more intense and broader collective relationships (...) Individuation is always to some extent opposed to collective norms, since it means separation and differentiation from the general and a building up of the particular – not a particularity that is *sought out*, but one that is already ingrained in the psychic constitution. The opposition to the collective norm, however, is only apparent, since closer examination shows that the individual standpoint is not *antagonistic* to it, but only *differently oriented*' (Jung, 1990, p. 267).

this stage, it is fundamentally a question of collective problems, which have activated the collective unconscious because they require collective rather than personal compensation (Jung, 1990, p. 152)<sup>72</sup>.

Jung distinguishes the interest accorded by the conscious mind to these impersonal, universal problems between an illegitimate one, 'when they are either mere intellectual curiosity or a flight from unpleasant reality', and a legitimate one, 'when they arise from the deepest and truest needs of the individual' (Jung, 1990, p. 156). The formation of the symbol fits into the second category, inherent to the process of individuation and brought forth by a transcendent function:

Individuation is closely connected with the transcendent function, since this function creates individual lines of development which could never be reached by keeping the path prescribed by collective norms (Jung, 1990, p. 267).

Jung explains the dynamic of the formation of the symbol as the collaboration of the two opposite states – the most highly differentiated mental functions and the most primitive levels of the psyche – facing one another in the fullest conscious opposition:

this necessarily entails a violent disunion with oneself, to the point where thesis and antithesis negate one another, while the ego is forced to acknowledge its absolute participation in both (Jung, 1990, p. 290).

Jung pointedly distinguishes symbol from symptom: a symptom occurs if one part subordinates the other, creating a product that will account for the predominance of one part, thus constituting the *symptom* of the suppressed antithesis; the symptom lacks the redeeming effect of the symbol, 'since it fails to

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<sup>72</sup> Jung adds that 'the more we become conscious of ourselves through self-knowledge, the more the layer of the personal unconscious that is superimposed on the collective unconscious will be diminished' (Jung, 1990, p. 152).

express the full right of all parts of the psyche to exist, being a constant reminder of the suppressed antithesis even though consciousness may not take this fact into account' (Jung, 1990, p. 290). The full parity of the opposites attested by the ego's absolute participation on both leads to a suspension of the will, causing a damming up of the vital energy, only bearable by a new, uniting function that transcends the opposites – the transcendent function – which arises from the regression of the libido caused by the blockage: the neutrality and inactivity of consciousness bring about an activity of the unconscious, where all the differentiated functions have their common, archaic root (Jung, 1990, p. 290). This function brings forth a new mediatory content – the symbol – charged with the energy created by the tension of opposites that protects it

from the conflict which immediately breaks out again, for both the opposites are striving to get the new product on their side (Jung, 1990, p. 291)<sup>73</sup>.

The stability of the ego and the superiority of the mediatory product (over the conflicting opposites) thus become counterparts of a process of construction in which thesis and antithesis both play a part (Jung, 1990, p. 291)<sup>74</sup>, while, remarkably,

the new content governs the whole attitude, putting an end to the division and forcing the energy of the opposites into a common channel (Jung, 1990, p. 292).

In this, Jung's assertion of the formation of the symbol parallels the knowledge expressed in primordial psycho-physiological technologies, whose

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<sup>73</sup> Jung further explains 'the appropriation or dissolution of the mediatory product by either side is successful only if the ego is not completely divided but inclines more to one side or the other. But if one side succeeds in winning over and dissolving the mediatory product, the ego goes along with it, whereupon an identification of the ego with the most favoured function (inferior function) ensues. Consequently, the process of division will be repeated later on a higher plane' (Jung, 1990, p. 291).

<sup>74</sup> '... the spiritual thesis, because of its rich spiritual associations, and also for the sensual

collection of concrete experimental techniques, exerted on the physical body and acting on the energetic body and its system of meridians, aims at awakening the kundaliní energy<sup>75</sup>. These techniques

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antithesis, because of its sensuous imagery'.

<sup>75</sup> Among the writings of Carl Gustav Jung we find several that concern eastern conceptions of psychism: *Psychological Commentaries on The Tibetan Book of Great Liberation* (1939), *The Psychology of Eastern Meditation* (1943), *The Holy Men of India: introduction to Zimmer's Der Weg zum Selbst* (1944) and, of utmost importance for this research, his *Notes of the Seminar The Psychology of Kundalini Yoga*, 1932. In this collection of texts, 'Jung's lectures are principally taken up with providing a modern psychological interpretation of the *chakras*', as its editor, Sonu Shamdasani, synthesizes in the introduction of the book (Jung, 1996, p. xxiv), later adding that it would 'be a mistake to view Jung's commentary as consisting in the translation of the terms of *Kundalini* yoga into psychological concepts whose meaning had already been delimited in advance: for in the course of translating the terms of *Kundalini* yoga into those of analytical psychology, the latter became altered and extended. At base, the symbolism of the *chakras* enabled Jung to develop an archetypal regional topography of the psyche and to provide a narration of the process of individuation in terms of the imaginal transit between these regions. It also led him to argue that for individual transformation to be possible, it required a concomitant transformation of ontology, to which his work was oriented' (Jung, 1996, p. xlv). Regarding the *chakras*, Jung says: 'So, too, the *chakras* are symbols. They symbolize highly complex psychic facts, which at the present moment we could not possibly express except in images. The *chakras* are therefore of great value to us because they represent a real effort to give a symbolic theory of the psyche. The psyche is something so highly complicated, so vast in extent, and so rich in elements unknown to us, and its aspects overlap and interweave with one another in such an amazing degree, that we always turn to symbols in order to try to represent what we know about it. (...) The *chakras*, then, become a valuable guide for us in this obscure field because the East, and India especially, has always tried to understand the psyche as a whole. It has an intuition of the self, and therefore it sees the ego and consciousness as only more or less unessential parts of the self. All this seems very strange to us: it appears to us as though India were fascinated by the background of consciousness, because we ourselves are entirely identified with our foreground, with the conscious' (Jung, 1996, p. 61). Regarding the *kundalini* Jung says: 'To activate the unconscious means to awaken the divine, the *dévi*, *Kundalini* – to begin the development of the suprapersonal within the individual in order to kindle the light of the gods. *Kundalini*, which is to be awakened in the sleeping *múladhára* world, is the suprapersonal, the non-ego, the totality of the psyche through which alone we can attain the higher *chakras* in a cosmic or metaphysical sense' (Jung, 1996, pp. 68-69).

Shamdasani explains that 'as early as 1912, in *Transformation and Symbols of the Libido*, Jung provided psychological interpretations of passages in the Upanishads and the Rig Veda [the first written source of the Hindu religious tradition]. While this opened the possibility of a comparison between the practice of analysis and that of yoga, possibly the first explicit comparison was made by F. I. Winter in *The Yoga System and Psychoanalysis*. He contrasted psychoanalysis, as depicted in the work of Freud and Jung, with Patanjali's *Yoga Sūtras* [the text that codifies Classical Yoga, and made Yoga one of the six *dārśhanas* of Hinduism]. Before Jung himself took up the subject, his work was already being compared to yoga (...) An account of Jung's encounter with Eastern thought would be in complete without mention of Count Hermann Keyserling and his School of Wisdom at Darmstadt, which provided a collegiate environment for Jung's explorations. (...) [Keyserling] contended that the new psychology actually represented a rediscovery of what was already known by the ancient Indians (...) What was distinctive about Keyserling's approach was that he viewed yoga as a psychological system superior to any in the West: "The Indians have done more than anyone else to perfect the method of training which leads to an enlargement and deepening of consciousness (...) Yoga (...) appears entitled to one of the most highest places among the paths to self-perfection (Jung, 1996, p. xix-xx). Sonu Shamdasani recounts how, in his exchange with other specialists, Jung set the Indian tradition within a mentality of its own, and his own system of psychology of depths within the Western mentality: 'Jung specified his psychological understanding of tantric yoga as follows: "Indian philosophy is namely the interpretation given to the precise condition of the non-ego,

reach the same result: a forceful arrest of the activity of the vital and mental energies on the plane of duality, and their reflux to the central via, where the ignition is produced (...) the reunification within oneself, or reduction by force of the dual alternating energies to the unique principle of which they are not but a polarization (Michaël, 1980, p. 211).

In the energetic body and respective system of meridians, or *nádís*<sup>76</sup>,

normally the *prána* rises and descends along the *nádís* *idá* and *pingalá* and the other *nádís*. The purpose of all of the methods consists in emptying these *nádís* of their *prána* thus leaving them 'dead'. The *prána* is forced to pass through the central *nádí*, *sushumná*, thus awakening the *kundaliní* (Rivière, 1993, p. 92)<sup>77</sup>.

And Jung synthesizes the psychic prevalence of the symbol:

I have called this process in its totality the transcendent function,

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which affects our personal psychology, however independent from us it remains. It sees the aim of human development as bringing about an approach to and connection between the specific nature of the non-ego and the conscious ego. Tantra yoga then gives a representation of the condition and the developmental phases of this impersonality, as it itself in its own way produces the light of a higher suprapersonal consciousness" (*Indian parallels*, 7 October 1931, *Bericht über das Deutsche Seminar von Dr. C. G. Jung*, 5–10. Oktober in Küsnacht-Zürich, edited by Olga von Koenig-Fachsenfeld, Stuttgart, 1932, pp. 66–67, translation by Sonu Shamdasani) (Jung, 1996, p. xxiii). According to Shamdasani, '*Kundalini* yoga presented Jung with a model of something that was almost completely lacking in Western psychology – an account of the developmental phases of higher consciousness' (Jung, 1996, p. xxiv). Shamdasani also accounts the encounter of Jung with Yoga, first with his use of Yoga practices to appease him during his research on his own unconscious, and afterwards, his interest in the *kundaliní* through a European patient that had been brought up in the East, whose 'dreams and fantasies he could not understand until he came across Sir John Woodroffe's *The Serpent Power*, which consisted of translations of the *sat-chakra-nirúpana* and the *páduká-panchaka*, together with extensive commentaries. Woodroffe was primarily responsible for making the tantric texts known in the West through his translations and commentaries (...) Jung claimed that the symbolism of *Kundalini* yoga suggested that the bizarre symptomatology that patients at times presented actually resulted from the awakening of the *Kundaliní*. He argued that knowledge of such symbolism enabled much that would otherwise be seen as the meaningless by-products of a disease process to be understood as meaningful symbolic processes, and explicated the often peculiar physical localizations of symptoms' (Jung, 1996, p. xxvi). Finally, Shamdasani concludes that 'Jung's interest (...) was with yoga not as "philosophy and religion" but as psychology. Hence his definition of yoga was a psychological one: "Yoga was originally a natural process of introversion (...) Such introversions lead to characteristic inner processes of personality changes. In the course of several thousand years these introversions became gradually organized as methods, and along widely differing ways' (in: *Yoga and the West*, p. 873) And Shamdasani adds, 'Jung saw the inner processes to which yoga gave rise as universal, and the particular methods employed to achieve them as culturally specific. For Jung, yoga represented a rich storehouse of symbolic depictions of inner experience and of the individuation process in particular. He claimed that "important parallels with yoga [and analytical psychology] have come to light, especially with *Kundalini* yoga and the symbolism of tantric yoga, Lamaism, and Taoistic yoga in China. These forms of yoga with their rich symbolism afford me invaluable comparative material for the interpretation of the collective unconscious"' (in: *Yoga and the West*, p. 875).

<sup>76</sup> See note 59, 60, 61 and 62.

<sup>77</sup> See note 59.

“function” being here understood not as a basic function but as a complex function made up of other functions, and “transcendent” not as denoting a metaphysical quality but merely the fact that this function facilitates a transition from one attitude to another. The raw material shaped by thesis and antithesis, and in the shaping of which the opposites are united, is the living symbol. Its profundity of meaning is inherent in the raw material itself, the very stuff of the psyche, transcending time and dissolution; and its configuration by the opposites ensures its sovereign power over all psychic functions’ (Jung, 1990, p. 292).

### THE ‘FULL-VOID’: AESTHETICS AS AN ‘ETHICAL-RELIGIOUS’ SENSE

While the process of individuation is the comprehensive achievement of a synthesis of conscious and unconscious contents by the realization and assimilation of instinct as well as by the realization of the archetype’s effect upon conscious contents, the formation of the symbol is, by excellence, the psychic occurrence through which the foremost event of the process of individuation takes place, namely the confrontation with an archetype or an instinct. Jung regards the

confrontation with an archetype or instinct [as] an ethical problem of the first magnitude, the urgency of which is felt only by people who find themselves faced with the need to assimilate the unconscious and integrate their personalities. This only falls to the lot of the man who realized that he has a neurosis or that all is not well with his psychic constitution. These are certainly not the majority. (...) But once a man knows that he is, or should be, responsible, he feels responsible also for his psychic constitution, the more so the more clearly he sees what he would have to be in order to become healthier, more stable, and more efficient. Once he is on the way to assimilating the unconscious he can be certain that he will escape no difficulty that is an integral part of his nature (Jung, 1990, p. 80).

In this, however, according to Jung, the unconscious is not only



spontaneous but can actually take the lead (Jung, 1990, p. 158), triggering off neurosis and ultimately resolving it by means of the numinous factor inherent to the archetype. Jung regards this numinous factor as 'a dynamic agency or effect not caused by an arbitrary act of will', to further formulate it in accordance with the original use of the word religion, that is, as 'a careful consideration and observation of certain dynamic factors that are conceived as "powers"', such as the power that encompasses an activated archetype. Therefore, Jung uses the term 'religion' to designate 'the attitude peculiar to a consciousness which has been changed by the experience of the *numinosum*' (Jung, 1990, pp. 489-490)<sup>78</sup>. Jung and Eliade agree on the role of the archetype concerning what might be acknowledged as the religious attitude:

religious ideas do not, in psychological reality, rest solely upon tradition and faith, but originate with the archetypes, the "careful consideration" of which – religere – constitutes the essence of religion (Jung, 1990, p. 93);

religious life and all the creations that spring from it, are dominated by what one may call 'the tendency toward the archetype' however many and varied are the components that go to make up any religious creation (any divine form, rite, myth or cult) their expression tends constantly to revert to an archetype (Eliade, 1958, p. 58).

In 1960, following the development of the 'organic line', Lygia Clark published the text *O Vazio-pleno* (*The Full-void*) with the following introductory sentences:

Art, for me, is valid only in the ethical-religious sense, connected to the internal elaboration of the artist in its most profound sense, which is the *existential*. All of my vision is not purely optical but is viscerally connected to my life-experience<sup>79</sup> of feeling, not only in the immediate sense but, even more so, in the deep sense of which we do

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<sup>78</sup> See note 69.

<sup>79</sup> The Portuguese term 'vivência' is translated by Guy Brett as 'life-act' (Brett, 2004, p. 27).

not know the origin (Clark, 1997, pp. 111-113)<sup>80</sup>.

In this text, Lygia Clark speaks of the sense of existence as a progression leading toward the 'consciousness of the plenitude of the full-void (inner time)', and also as the attainment of an 'ethical-religious conception' of inner divinity<sup>81</sup> in which the polarity between life and death disappears, for, as she says, 'life exists only in relation to polarities'. Accordingly, she regards man from a cosmologic perspective: '[Man] is form and void. He comes from the void to form (life) and leaves the latter into the full-void'. For Lygia Clark, seemingly, the void is the lack of meaning, becoming a full-void when ascribed with value by the artist through the work of art, in what she calls a 'profoundly religious message, in the highest ethical sense': 'in art, we go in search of the void (from which we came) and, when we find it ascribed with value, we find our inner time'. She describes the work of art as the means to cancel the polarities<sup>82</sup>, providing a glimpse of that 'moment of static within the cosmologic dynamics', a 'piece of eternity', a '*flash* of the infinite materialized in the finite'. These assertions converge to the primordial ideas of suspension of profane time and return to the origin, that is, to the paradoxical condition of the original moment, recurrent in the text, and concerning those who experience the work of art:

Man [the artist] searches for his inner time and when he finds it, he already experiences all of his origin. It is in that moment that he surpasses the death-life frontier. (...) The ones who are less creative will feel, through the work of the artist, that *moment* as the answer to

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<sup>80</sup> *O vazio-pleno* (originally in *Jornal do Brasil*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1960, Rio de Janeiro, Suplemento dominical, p. 5). See Annexes.

<sup>81</sup> Lygia Clark relates 'ethical-religious conception' and divinity in these terms: 'On that instant we reach an ethical-religious conception that is contrary to the existence of a God outside of us: he is inside of us and is the best we have: the idea of life and death abandons us those two polarities cease to exist' (Clark, 1997, p. 111).

<sup>82</sup> Lygia Clark refers several times throughout the text the opposition between life and death as the expression of that polarity or main opposition: 'the idea of life and death abandons us and there are no longer those two polarities (...) The beginning *life* and the ending *death* cease to exist. The work of art is the materialization of this fusion. That is what makes it *eternal* or transcendental'.

a question of universal sense.

Acknowledging the importance of the universal issues, Lygia Clark also places this search within a progression that can only be regarded as the process of individuation such as Jung has presented it. She refers man's confrontation with his inner contents and the need to integrate them: 'In order to reach this state of plenitude it is necessary to relive all his previous experiences, face them – which means liberation. There he [man] reaches an ethical state in the highest sense'. And she concludes pointing out the main implication of that endeavour: 'it is essential that the individual conquers his own inner time by gaining awareness of this ethical-religious sense so that it doesn't get lost or destroyed'<sup>83</sup>.

The insightful image of the 'full-void' would persist as a recurrent reference throughout the following twenty-eight years of her life and work. The 'full-void' is a primordial image pertaining to the category of the conjunction of the opposites. The conjunction of the opposites, let us recall, is a primal intuition that sums up the polarized dynamics of the psyche, which is a fundamental observation held by archaic experimental philosophies based in psycho-

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<sup>83</sup> Later that year, in 17<sup>th</sup> September, Lygia Clark wrote *Considerações a Alguém* (*Considerations to Someone*), where she further explains the difference between 'absolute time' and 'mechanical time', the former defined as 'ethical and religious maturity', arguably a Bergsonian reference: 'Only in art can we surpass such immediatism and convey absolute time. If every man felt this absolute time as his main need, what would become of the immediatism of life? Life as we know it is immediate. Practical space is immediate. Mechanical time is immediate. One day after the other is a mechanical time. I see that educating is exactly giving the awareness of that mechanical time to the kid, who doesn't get it like us. Hence, the nuisance of educating, for us and for them. But we do it so that, within the lifetime he is destined to live, he may reach the absolute time that is the ethical and religious maturity. He accepts his animal origin: he is the animal that eats, sleeps, that has a home, clothes, etc. and then he goes in search of his divinity to complete it as an eternal man. (Clark, 1997, p. 144); in the original version: 'É só na arte que se pode ultrapassar esse imediatismo e transmitir o tempo absoluto. Se todos os homens sentissem este tempo absoluto como necessidade principal, o que seria do imediatismo da vida? A vida que conhecemos é imediata. O espaço prático é imediato. O tempo mecânico é imediato. Um dia depois do outro é um tempo mecânico. Vejo que educar é exatamente dar consciência deste tempo imediato ao menino, que não o tem como nós. Daí a chatice de educar, tanto para a gente como para eles. Mas quando o fazemos é para que ele, dentro do tempo de vida que lhe é destinado, possa alcançar o tempo absoluto que é a maturidade ética e religiosa. Ele aceita a sua origem animal: é o bicho que come, que dorme, que tem teto, agasalho, etc. e depois vai em busca da sua divindade para

physiological techniques, and, more recently in the history of the knowledge on the psyche, postulated by the Jungian theory of psychism. Among the many examples of polar oppositions that Lygia Clark always used in her writings, such as life and death, earth and space, inside and outside, before and after, as well as the recurrent explicit reference that 'life runs on polarities' (Clark, 1997, p. 111)<sup>84</sup>, the image of the 'full-void' stands for a complex of meanings pointing towards creative accomplishment or access to the creative potency, whereby 'man comes from the void to reach the 'full void'" (Clark, 1997, pp. 11-113).

Complementary, its paradoxical character illustrates the ultimate cosmogonic situation of the man who has attained the conjunction of the opposites, the balancing of the polarities, the suppression of duality. Seemingly rooted in childhood (Clark, 1997, p. 166)<sup>85</sup>, this image bound her artistic practice with the pursuit of her process of individuation, bringing cohesion and continuity to the archaic imagery that arose from her successive psychic crisis and from the sessions of psychoanalysis with Pierre Fedida. During an initial stage of her research, after the 'death of the plane' (Clark, 1997, p. 117)<sup>86</sup>, the 'full-void' underlied the assertions of 'the living time' and of 'the living act', and

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completá-lo como um homem eterno'.

<sup>84</sup> 'Life exists only in a relation with the polarities'.

<sup>85</sup> 'When I was a little girl I always thought about our inner void and I had the fantasy that when we inhaled at birth we were introjecting the soul itself. At bottom, the "inside is the outside" is this fantasy, less naive perhaps, for it abstracts the biological growing and adds the cosmic growing. Then it is no longer the duration but the act, identification of our void, elastic lung and introjection of the full void, cosmic lung. We swallow the cosmos, God, and we are lending sense to our inner void. Spiritual gymnastics' (28<sup>th</sup> October 1963); in the original version, 'Quando eu era garota eu sempre pensei sobre o nosso vazio interior e fazia a fantasia de quando respirávamos ao nascer era a própria alma que introjetávamos. No fundo, o "dentro é o fora" é esta fantasia, menos ingênua talvez, pois abstrai o crescimento biológico e acrescenta o crescimento cósmico. Aí já não é a duração mas sim o ato, identificação do nosso vazio, pulmão elástico e introjeção do vazio pleno, pulmão cósmico. Engolimos o cosmos, Deus, e estamos emprestando sentido ao nosso vazio interior. Ginástica espiritual' (28 de Outubro de 1963).

<sup>86</sup> On the text *A Morte do Plano* (*Death of the Plane*), Lygia Clark writes: 'To demolish the plane as the support of expression is to gain awareness of the unity as an organic living whole. (...) We dive into the totality of cosmos; we are a part of that cosmos'; in the Portuguese version: 'Demolir o plano como suporte da expressão é tomar consciência da unidade como um todo vivo e orgânico. (...) Mergulhamos na totalidade do cosmos: fazemos parte desse cosmos'.

the resulting ideas of 'totality' and 'precariousness', in the *Bichos (Animals)* in 1960, and in *Caminhando (Walking)* in 1963. Later on, after the 'suppression of the object and of the poetics of transference' (Clark, 1997, p. 267)<sup>87</sup>, the 'full-void' underlied the assertions of 'living culture' and 'rite without myth', in the experiments that ran from the *Nostalgia do Corpo (Longing for the Body)* until the *Baba Antropofágica (Anthropophagic Drool)*. The 'full-void' would finally underlie the assertion of 'the creative state' with the therapeutic setting of the *Estruturação do Self*.

Lygia Clark viewed the gestures of manipulating the *Bichos* as the chance for the common man to have an immediate life-experience ('vivência') of his inner sense, an exercise to develop the expressive gesture in what she called 'reliving the ritual': 'The spectator no longer projects or identifies himself with the work. He lives the work and, living its nature, he lives himself, inside of himself' (Clark, 1997, p. 122)<sup>88</sup>. The manipulation of the *Bichos* enables the spectator to surpass mechanical time, bringing forth the time of 'a life-experience that carries a living structure within itself' (Clark, 1998, p. 35)<sup>89</sup>. She would also refer to this 'living moment' as the point in which the clock's hands stop, forgetting the passage of time, and marking the 'point of the real' (Clark, 1997, p. 132)<sup>90</sup>, statements that suggest the suspension of mundane or profane time as a condition to experience one's inner sense. While the spatial animated articulation of planes in the *Animals* turned the surface into an 'organic body', a 'living entity' real' (Clark, 1997, p.

<sup>87</sup> *Da Supressão do Objeto (Anotações) (On the Suppression of the Object (Notes))*.

<sup>88</sup> *Do ritual (On Ritual)*, 'O espectador já não se projeta e se identifica na obra. Ele vive a obra, e vivendo a natureza dela, ele vive ele próprio, dentro dele'.

<sup>89</sup> 'Not mechanic time, of course, but the living time that brings a living structure within it. I am honestly sure that the *Bichos* are that, without modesty or exaggeration'; in the original version: 'Não o tempo mecânico, é claro, mas o tempo vivência que traz uma estrutura viva em si. Sinceramente eu tenho certeza de que os *Bichos* são isto, sem modéstia nem exageros'.

<sup>90</sup> *Branco (White)*, '... the living moment is the point in which the clock's hand stops, forgets about the other passages of time marking the point of the real'; in the original version: '... o momento vivo é o ponto em que o ponteiro pára, se esquece das outras passagens no tempo marca o ponto

140), with *Caminhando*, the experience of cutting a Moebius Strip would deepen into 'the experience of a limitless time and of a continuous space', presenting a 'single kind of duration of time, the act; (...) [in which] nothing exists before nor afterwards' (Clark, 1997, p. 151)<sup>91</sup>. Maintaining the gratuitousness of the gesture, kept clear of any significance, the spectator will immediately realize, at the very instant of the act, the sense of his action (Clark, 1997, pp. 152-153)<sup>92</sup>. In *Caminhando*, the instant of the act is not renewable, and only the instant of the act is living: 'The instant of the act is the only living reality within ourselves. Gaining awareness is already the past' (Clark, 1997, p. 155)<sup>93</sup>. The 'immanence of the act', as Clark called it, brought several implications, leaving her 'in a sort of void' (Clark, 1997, p. 187)<sup>94</sup>: the 'fusion' between the work and the spectator, accomplishing a unique reality, whole and existential; the end of the 'transference of the object', dismissing the concept of work of art and of artist, who gets 'dissolved in the collective', 'becomes the other' and 'elastic and malleable' (Clark, 1997, pp. 265-268)<sup>95</sup>, while proposing to the others to 'be themselves and attain

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do real'.

<sup>91</sup> *Caminhando* (*Walking*).

<sup>92</sup> *A Propósito da Magia do Objeto* (*Regarding the Magic of the Object*), 'Caminhando demands that we dispose a priori of all the practical and immediate signification of those gestures (...) it is necessary that [that action] is purely gratuitous and that you do not try to know – while you are cutting – what are you going to cut afterward and what you have already cut (...) keeping the gratuitousness of the gesture'; in the original version, 'Caminhando (...) exige que afastemos a priori toda a significação prática e imediata desses gestos (...) é necessário que [essa ação] seja puramente gratuita e que você não procure saber – enquanto estiver cortando – o que vai cortar depois e o que já cortou (...) conservando a gratuidade do gesto'.

<sup>93</sup> *A Propósito do Instante* (*Regarding the Instant*), in the original version, 'O instante do ato não se renova. (...) Só o instante do ato é vivo. (...) O instante do ato é a única realidade viva em nós mesmos. Tomar consciência é já o passado'.

<sup>94</sup> 'Caminhando left me inside a kind of void: the immanence of the act, the relinquishing the transference of the object, the very dissolution of the concept of work of art and artist'; in the original version: 'O Caminhando me deixava dentro de uma espécie de vazio: a imanência do ato, o abandono da transferência do objecto, a própria dissolução do conceito de obra e de artist'. See note 97.

<sup>95</sup> *Da Supressão do Objeto* (*Anotações*) (*On the Suppression of the Object* (*Notes*)), 'Through Caminhando I lose my authorship, I embody the act as a concept of existence. I dissolve myself in the collective, I lose my image (...) I lost my identity I am dissolved in the collective. I see myself through every people regardless of sex of age. (...) I am the other. I feel so elastic and maleable that I adapt myself to all sorts of contacts'; in the original version, 'Através do Caminhando perco a minha autoria, incorporo o ato como conceito da existência. Dissolvo-me no coletivo, perco a

the singular state of art without art' (Clark, 1997, p. 154)<sup>96</sup>; and the actual feeling of totality, 'as if a whole eternity was lodged on the act' and 'the world was perceived as a unique, global rhythm' (Clark, 1997, p. 165)<sup>97</sup>, unravelling the sense of existence, a totality which should be encompassed by joy, since 'it taught how to live on the basis of precariousness' (Clark, 1997, p. 187)<sup>98</sup>.

This totality with – and dilution in – the collective were further described by the artist as the filling up of the inner void through breathing, by which the 'inside is the outside' (Clark, 1997, p. 164)<sup>99</sup>, a reverie rooted in her childhood and, as it were, the remote origin of the image of the 'full-void'<sup>100</sup>. Brought into the future, into the 'immanence of the act', the poetics of the physiology of breathing gained cosmic proportions, as Clark explained, 'identifying our void,

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minha imagem (...) Perdi a minha identidade estou diluída no coletivo. Vejo-me através de todas as pessoas independente de sexo de idade. (...) Eu sou o outro. Sinto-me tão elástica e maleável que me adapto a toda a sorte de contatos'.

<sup>96</sup> 'Dissolving in the world, fusing with the collective, at the same time the artist loses his singularity, his expressive power. He is contented by proposing to the others be be themselves and attain the singular state of art without art'; in the original version, 'Ao mesmo tempo que se dissolve no mundo, em que se funde no coletivo, o artista perde sua singularidade, seu poder expressivo. Ele se contenta em propor que os outros sejam eles mesmos, e que atinjam o estado singular da arte sem arte'.

<sup>97</sup> *Do Ato (On the Act)*, 'Now, for the first time, with the *Caminhando*, it is the contrary. I understand the totality of the world as a global, unique rhythm'; in the original version, 'Agora, pela primeira vez, com o *Caminhando*, é o contrário. Percebo a totalidade do mundo como um ritmo único, global'.

<sup>98</sup> *Capturar um Fragmento de Tempo Suspenso (Capturing a Fragment of Suspended Time)*, '... only the living-act-of-doing matters. (...) The *Caminhando* left me inside a kind of void: the immanence of the act, the relinquishing the transference of the object, the very dissolution of the concept of work of art and artist. (...) That experience is lived in the instant. (...) as if a whole eternity was lodged in the act of participating. That feeling of totality captured in the act should be perceived with great joy, because it allows us to learn how to live in the basis of precariousness. That sensation of precariousness should be absorbed in the immanence of the act of discovering the sense of existence'; in the original version, '... só importa o ato-vivo-do-fazer. (...) O *Caminhando* me deixava dentro de uma espécie de vazio: a imanência do ato, o abandono da transferência do objecto, a própria dissolução do conceito de obra e de artista. (...) Essa experiência se vive no instante. (...) como se toda a uma eternidade se alojasse no ato da participação. Esse sentimento de totalidade capturado no ato, tem que ser percebido com muita alegria porque nos permite aprender a viver sobre as bases da precariedade. Essa sensação de precariedade deve ser absorvida na imanência do ato de descobrir o sentido da existência'.

<sup>99</sup> 'Another dream: in the inside, that is the outside, a window and me. Through that window, I long to pass to the outside, that for me is the inside. (...) From that dream was born the *Bicho* that I named *The Inside is the Outside*. (...) I woke up many times standing by the window of my room, longing for the outside space as an "inside"; in the original version, 'Outro sonho: no interior, que é o exterior, uma janela e eu. Através dessa janela, desejo passar para fora, que para mim é o dentro. (...) Desse sonho nasceu o *Bicho* que chamei *O Dentro é o Fora*. (...) Muitas vezes acordei à janela do meu quarto procurando o espaço exterior como sendo o "dentro"'.<sup>100</sup>

elastic lung, and introjecting the full-void, cosmic lung':

I became aware of my cosmic lung. I penetrate the total rhythm of the world. The world is my lung. (...) I had the perception that the absolute was that "full-void", that inner totality on the outside that I always speak of. The "full-void" contains all the possibilities. It is the act that fills it with sense (Clark, 1997, p. 164)<sup>101</sup>.

The plenitude in penetrating, through breathing, the unified rhythm of the world, is perceived by the artist as 'being inhaled by the others', but also as the 'fusion' of the two poles, life and death (Clark, 1997, p. 165)<sup>102</sup>. From 1963, throughout the subsequent experiments of the *Nostalgia do Corpo* (*Longing for the Body*) with plastic objects, air and breath, Lygia Clark mentioned the 'unknown energy that was born' (Clark, 1997, p. 188)<sup>103</sup> when she became aware of her own breath while using the object *Respire Comigo* (*Breathe with Me*), and how she felt, after filling up plastic bags with her breath, 'as if she could lie on the floor and touch with a simple gesture the ceiling of her flat, six meters high' (Clark, 1998, p. 85)<sup>104</sup>.

<sup>100</sup> See note 84.

<sup>101</sup> *Do Ato* (*On the Act*), 'I gained consciousness of my "cosmic lung". I penetrate in the total rhythm of the world. The world is my lung'; in the original version, 'Tomei consciência de meu "pulmão cósmico". Penetro no ritmo total do mundo. O mundo é o meu pulmão'.

<sup>102</sup> 'Now I am no longer alone. I am breath in by the others. (...) Could that fusion be death? Why does that plenitude taste as death? I am so incredibly alive... How to always unite those two poles? Several times in my life I discovered the identity of life and of death. A discovery that, nevertheless, always has a different taste'; in the original version, 'Agora não estou mais só. Sou aspirada pelos outros. (...) Seria essa fusão a morte? Porque essa plenitude tem o sabor de morte? Estou tão incrivelmente viva... Como unir sempre esses dois pólos? Várias vezes em minha vida descobri a identidade da vida e da morte. Descoberta que, no entanto, tinha cada vez um saber diferente'.

<sup>103</sup> *Reencontrar o significado de nossos gestos rotineiros* (*Find anew the meaning of our routinely gestures*), originally published in *L'art c'est le corps*, Preuves, 1973, 13, p. 142-143: '... the consciousness of my breathing left me anguished for several hours, and at the same time it seemed as if an unknown energy was being born in me'; in the original version, '... consciência de minha respiração me deixou angustiada por várias horas, e ao mesmo tempo parecia que nascia uma energia desconhecida em mim'.

<sup>104</sup> 14 Novembro 1968 (14<sup>th</sup> November 1968), '... after formulating those big bags with my lung, when I lie down on the floor I feel that I could touch with a simple gesture the ceiling of my flat, which is no more and no less than six meters high. ... Almost as if an egg of space had been created, which belongs to me and embraces me'; in the original version, '... depois de formular esses grandes sacos com o meu pulmão, sinto quando deito no chão que poderia tocar com um simples gesto o teto do meu apartamento que tem nada menos que seis metros de altura... Quase como se tivesse criado um ovo de espaço que me pertence e me abraça'.



Almost a decade later<sup>105</sup>, between 1970 to 1972, Lygia Clark went through one of her richest phases in inner accomplishments, living important processes by means of archaic imagery, which included the crucial crisis that had occurred in *Carboneras*. This period was appropriately named by the artist as *Mute Thought* (*Pensamento Mudo*), since she would definitely suppress the object and provisionally suspend her formulations, to identify that personal situation as 'the simple living without any proposition (...) expressing herself through living', enjoying the teachings of the previous propositions that altogether had enabled her to re-learn to live (Clark, 1997, pp. 270)<sup>106</sup>:

I keep changing, wondering myself in amazement, with no control over anything, of the smallest happenings, letting myself flow, striped of almost everything, keeping only my inner integrity (Clark, 1997, pp. 277)<sup>107</sup>.

This availability can be seen as an aspect of 'living on the basis of precariousness' which, according to Clark, 'should be absorbed in the immanence of the act of discovering the sense of existence'<sup>108</sup>, or else a predisposition

confirming precariousness as a new concept, the magic of the act in its immanence, as well as the negation of the object that has lost all

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<sup>105</sup> After the *Nostalgia do Corpo*, *A Casa é o Corpo* (*The House is the Body*), and *O Homem, estrutura viva de uma arquitetura biológica e celular* (*Man, Living Structure of a Biological and Celular Architecture*).

<sup>106</sup> 'One sleepless night I bound its meaning: the *Mute* thought was already being formulated: it was the simple living without making any proposition, it was the relearning or, better even, I had relearned, through the other propositions, to live and was expressing myself through life! The leap to what I name perhaps 'The Precursors', that are young people who don't formulate works of art but already live in life that poetics previously formulated either through objects or propositions', in the original version, 'Uma noite de insônia amarrei o seu significado: *Pensamento mudo* já estava sendo formulado: era o simples viver sem fazer qualquer proposição, era o re aprender, ou por outro lado, havia, através das outras proposições, reaprendido a viver e estava me expressando através da vida! O salto para o que talvez chame de 'Os Precursores', que são os jovens que não formulam obras de arte mas já vivem na vida essa poética antes formulada ou através de objectos ou de proposições'.

<sup>107</sup> Paris, 17 de Maio 1971 (17 May 1971), 'I even think that I invent my own life, that I recreate it at every minute and that life recreates me at its own image; I live changing, wondering in amazement, with no control over anything, over the smallest happenings, letting myself flow, stripped of almost everything, keeping only my inner integrity'; in the original version, 'Até acho que invento minha própria vida, que a recrio todos os minutos e ela me recria à sua imagem; vivo mudando, me interrogando maravilhada, sem controle de nada, dos mínimos acontecimentos, me deixando fluir, despojada de quase tudo, guardando somente minha integridade interior'.

<sup>108</sup> See note 97.

its remaining projected poetic charge, in order to become a well where the crowd leans over to find itself in its essence (Clark, 1998, p. 57)<sup>109</sup>.

In fact, during this period, the artist would restate her dilution in the collective and her wholeness with the world: 'I have lost my measure and I am the measure of the others. A good exchange, for now I am everyone and not only myself' (Clark, 1997, p. 280)<sup>110</sup>; 'dozing in my bed, I had the experience of being inside the world and that night I dreamt I was the world, the landscape' (Clark, 1997, p. 259)<sup>111</sup>. She would eventually equate the 'abyssal void' of that formulation, which was free from the object and from the poetics of transference (Clark, 1997, p. 158)<sup>112</sup>, with the 'former full-void' of the poetics of transference, binding respectively the immanent space and the metaphysical space (Clark, 1997, p. 265-268)<sup>113</sup>: 'After rebinding those two voids, the present one became full of significance', which she specified as 'the feeling of death toward life and of life

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<sup>109</sup> In the original version, '... confirmando o precário como novo conceito, a magia do ato na sua imanência e também a negação do objeto que perdeu toda a sua carga poética ainda projetada, para se transformar num poço onde a multidão se debruça para se encontrar na sua essência'.

<sup>110</sup> Paris, 10 de Agosto de 1971 (10<sup>th</sup> August 1971), in the original version, 'Tenho visto muita gente e quando fico sózinha acho ótimo pois preciso muito de minha solidão. Talvez para compensar o que dou na comunicação que é paca e até já perdi a minha medida e sou a dos outros. Boa troca pois agora sou todos e não eu só'.

<sup>111</sup> Paris, 20 de Maio de 1970 (20<sup>th</sup> May 1970) in the original version, '... vivenciei outro dia, cochilando na cama, que estava dentro do mundo e foi nessa noite que sonhei que era o mundo, a paisagem, etc.'.

<sup>112</sup> Lygia Clark explains the poetics of transference as the awakening of the spectator's own poetics: 'It is the same problem of the poetics that is within us and is transferred to a certain object, person or to a personal vision of the world. It is urgent to awake such poetics in the reader and that he becomes aware that it is within him and not in the other the meaning of the world. Take him to lean over his 'full-void' in its potentiality of becoming'; in the original version, 'É o mesmo problema da poética que está em nós e é transferida para um determinado objeto, pessoa ou para uma visão pessoal do mundo. Urge despertar esta poética no leitor e que ele se aperceba que está nele e não no outro o significado do mundo. É levá-lo a debruçar-se sobre o seu 'vazio-pleno' na sua potencialidade de estar-sendo'.

<sup>113</sup> *Da Supressão do Objeto (Anotações)*, 'The swallowing of the external space in order to open the lungs in a cry, this space that I identified years ago as the 'full-void' when the poetics was still a transferring one. Rebinding of the metaphysical and the immanent spaces'; in the original version, 'O engolir o espaço exterior para abrindo os pulmões num grito, espaço esse identificado por mim como que chamei há anos de "vazio-pleno" em que a poética era ainda transferente. Religamento do espaço metafísico com o imanente'.

toward death' (Clark, 1997, p. 272)<sup>114</sup>.

By then, Lygia Clark felt that her work would hardly find a place within the artistic establishment and, writing to Hélio Oiticica about Jean Clay's arrangements for her to work at a psychiatric clinic, she remarked: 'There is no place for me in the world of the normal' (Clark, 1997, p. 276)<sup>115</sup>. Along the previous phases – *Nostalgia do Corpo*, *A Casa é o Corpo* (*The House is the Body*) (fig. 22), and *O Homem, estrutura viva de uma arquitetura biológica e celular* (*Man, living structure of a biological and cellular architecture*) (fig. 23) – her interest in working with the subject of the psyche, as well as her informal, intuitive and self-referential methodology, had grown clear:

The artist who is interested in working with psychoanalysts, gives his own material directly related with the body to regress patients and make them become conscious of their own body. That material is collected from the artist's own inside, who has lived his own regression and growth through its elaboration, by having what Laing called psychotic incidents (Clark, 1997, p. 264)<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>114</sup> In: 6 de maio de 1972 (6<sup>th</sup> May 1972), 'The abyssal void that I felt made me become aware of the former full void, previously my favourite theme. After I rebound those two voids, the present one became full of meaning. During the night I let the associations about the *Mute Thought* invaded me and I arrived at the foetus. I had the perception that the latter feels when it is ready to be born and had the first existential anguish. (...) I think this is the height of the mute thought, the dynamics, the passivity, the feeling of death towards life and of life towards death'; in the original version, 'O vazio abismal que sentia me fez tomar consciência do antigo vazio pleno que era antes meu tema predileto. Depois que reliquei esses dois vazios, o de agora se tornou pleno de significado. À noite deixei que as associações sobre o *Pensamento Mudo* me invadissem e cheguei até o feto. Tive a percepção de que o mesmo se sente pronto antes de nascer e tem a primeira angústia existencial. (...) Acho que é o máximo do pensamento mudo, a dinâmica, a passividade, o sentimento da morte para a vida e da vida para a morte'.

<sup>115</sup> In: 31 de março de 1971 (31<sup>st</sup> March 1971): 'Jean Clay is arranging for me to work at a clinic in the Loire, the most advanced in France, where Dolto and other interesting professionals are working with the body. If this goes through it will save me, a paradox, and this is a paradox, since, for someone like me, who made art to escape from the hospice, finishing there is incredible! But there is no place for me in the world of the normal. My work, that has completely abolished the object one year and a half ago and is expressed only through the gestural part, is out of any scheme of the art and I have no place between the artist and the system'; in the original version, 'Jean Clay está me arranjando para trabalhar numa clínica em Loire, clínica essa a mais avançada da França, onde trabalha a Dolto e outros profissionais interessantes que estão trabalhando com o corpo. Se isso der certo sera minha salvação, o que é um paradoxo, pois quem como eu fez arte para escapar do hospício, acabar lá é incrível! Mas não há lugar para mim no mundo dos normais. Meu trabalho, que de um ano e meio para cá aboliu completamente o objeto e se exprime somente pela parte gestual, está fora de qualquer esquema de arte e estou sem lugar entre o artista e o sistema'. Françoise Dolto is a French psychoanalyst, who worked with Lacan and is known for her research on the unconscious body image, and the language of the body.

<sup>116</sup> *Da Supressão do Objeto (Anotações)*, in the original version, 'O artista que está interessado em trabalhar com psicanalistas, dando o seu material ligado diretamente ao corpo para regredir

Throughout the following phase, *Fantasmática do Corpo* (*Fantasmagorics of the Body*<sup>117</sup>) (fig. 24), she would continue the collective experiments started out in 1972 at the Sorbonne<sup>118</sup>. There, working with groups of students, she carried out complete cycles of development with the duration of one academic year, which enabled her to 'prepare' the subjects, from the dismembering of the body (she used the French term 'morcellement'<sup>119</sup>) with the *Nostalgia do Corpo*, its reconstruction with *O Corpo é a Casa* (*The Body is the House*) (fig. 25), to its integration on the whole or 'collective body' with the *Baba Antropofágica* (*Anthropophagic Drool*) or *Canibalismo* (*Cannibalism*) (fig. 26). In the process, she would 'give everything to the other waiting for a return of the impressions they give me after trying out all my propositions. I introject them enriching myself, stabilizing myself, nourishing myself through the other' (Clark, 1997, p. 291)<sup>120</sup>.

In 1975, on her text *On the Suppression of the Object* (*Notes*) (Clark, 1997, pp. 264–265), Lygia Clark debates with hindsight the use of the body as a 'transferring object', opposing that 'romantic attitude of the artist' with the experiment *Caminhando*, which 'incorporated the act as a concept of existence',

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pacientes e fazê-los tomar consciência do próprio corpo. Material esse colhido de dentro do próprio artista, que viveu sua própria regressão e crescimento através de sua elaboração, tendo o que Laing chama de acidentes psicóticos'. R. D. Laing, Scottish psychiatrist who associated with the anti-psychiatric movement.

<sup>117</sup> The translation of the Portuguese term 'fantasmática' as 'fantasmagorics' follows Guy Brett's use of the term 'fantasmagoric production' (Brett, 2004, p. 47), adopted from Franklin Furnace, in the article *The Relational Object*, 1975–80, 1983, in: *Flue*, vol. 3, no. 2, Spring, p. 26.

<sup>118</sup> At the U.F.R. d'Arts Plastiques et Science de l'Art de l'Université de Paris 1.

<sup>119</sup> 6 de Julho 1974 (6<sup>th</sup> July 1974), 'I am still at the Sorbonne, where I found, for the first time, conditions to communicate my work, young people that I elaborate for a whole year and who are prepared, from the longing of the body – at bottom, its morcellement – until its reconstruction to end up in what I call the collective body, *Baba Antropofágica* or cannibalism'; in the original version, 'Continuo na Sorbonne, onde encontrei, pela primeira vez, condições para comunicar o meu trabalho, jovens que elaboro um ano inteiro e que são preparados, desde a nostalgia do corpo – no fundo o morcellement do mesmo – até à reconstrução do mesmo para acabar no que chamo de corpo coletivo, *Baba Antropofágica* ou canibalismo' (Clark, 1997, p. 287).

<sup>120</sup> In the original version, 'Dou tudo ao outro na espera da devolução das impressões que me dão depois de experimentarem todas as minhas proposições. Introjeto-as me enriquecendo, me estabilizando, me alimentando através do outro'.

thus revoking authorship upon the object and dissolving the artist in the collective. Lygia Clark further remarks that with *Caminhando* she found the connection between the 'transferring poetics of art with religion'. Her critical view of art and of religion can be better understood by the comments she issued on the experiments of the *Fantasmática do Corpo*, that bring forth the idea of a 'living culture', intrinsically dependent on what she called 'rite without myth':

my work is my own fastasmagorics, which I give to the other, proposing that they clean and enrich it with their own fantasmagorics: then I vomit the anthropophagic drool, which they swallow and add to their fastasmagorics again vomited, added up to the last consequences. That is what I call living culture and not dead culture, which is the expression of the former support (Clark, 1998, pp. 245-246)<sup>121</sup>

It is all about distinguishing two forms of culture. There is on one side what I call dead culture (...) in which the system of production is based on exploitation and alienation. (...) To this culture I counterpose what I call living culture, in which the artist cuts off with the traditional basis and gives anew to the body its central role (...) To achieve this, there must be a deinstitutionalization of the body as much as of every concrete relation. (...) For me it is all about producing a rite without mythology. With this rite we must resist every perspective that understands art as something that avoids looking, that in face of this condition avoids reflecting about the origin of art (Clark, 1997, p. 301)<sup>122</sup>

I manipulate the rite without myth. I deny the transferring myth, external to man. I compose a rite in which anyone who participates ends up seizing their own myth (Clark, 1997, p. 315)<sup>123</sup>.

<sup>121</sup> Paris, 6.11.74, in the original version, 'Por aí você vê que o meu trabalho é a minha própria fantasmática que dou ao outro, propondo que eles a limpem e a enriqueçam com as suas próprias fantasmáticas: então é a baba antropofágica que vomito, que é engolida por eles e somada às fantasmáticas deles vomitadas outra vez, somadas até as últimas consequências. Eis aí o que chamo de cultura viva e não cultura morta, que é a expressão do antigo suporte'.

<sup>122</sup> In the original version, 'Na verdade se trata de distinguir duas formas de cultura. Existe de um lado o que eu chamo de cultura morta. (...) em que o sistema de produção se baseia na exploração e na alienação. (...) Eu coloco a esta cultura uma oposição, o que eu chamo de cultura viva, em que o artista corta com a base tradicional e dá de novo ao corpo o seu papel central. (...) Para chegar lá, se deve fazer uma desinstitucionalização, tanto do corpo, como de toda a relação concreta. (...) Para mim se trata de produzir um rito sem mitologia. Com este rito temos de resistir a todas as perspectivas que entendem a arte como algo que evita o olhar, que em vista desta condição evita o refletir sobre a origem da arte'.

<sup>123</sup> *A fantasmática do corpo* (*The fantasmagorics of the body*), in the original version, 'Manipulo o rito sem o mito. Nego o mito transferente, exterior ao homem. Elaboro um rito em que cada um que participa termina assumindo o seu próprio mito'.

Seemingly, for Lygia Clark, the processes of a 'living culture' encompass self-knowledge, by 'seizing one's own myth', and the refusal of self-knowledge that does not spring from an experimental self-discovery, hence the 'deinstitutionalization of the body as much as of every concrete relation'.

According to Eliade, both

myths and rites always disclose a boundary situation of man (...) that man discovers in becoming conscious of his place in the universe (Eliade, 1961, p. 34).

In this, the role of the artist is, for Clark, to 'awaken the poetics' of the spectator, so that he

perceives that the significance of the world is within him and not in the other. Taking him to lean over his own 'full-void' in its potentiality of being (Clark, 1997, p. 158)<sup>124</sup>.

Therefore, it is not surprising that, as the apex of all of her experiments, the

*Estruturação do Self* should be brought forward in Brazil, during the undermining years of the military dictatorship<sup>125</sup>, enacted predominantly with clients that

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<sup>124</sup> In the original version, 'Urge despertar esta poética no leitor e que ele se aperceba que está nele e não no outro o significado do mundo. É levá-lo a debruçar-se sobre o seu "vazio-pleno" na sua potencialidade de estar-sendo'.

<sup>125</sup> The Brazilian dictatorship lasted from 1964 to 1985. On the 31<sup>st</sup> March 1964, a military coup deposed the President João Goulart and his government. Thenceforth, a succession of generals headed the military ruling, by means of 17 decrees (Atos Institucionais) and 104 complementary documents, which cancelled the Brazilian Constitution, democracy and civil rights, and legitimized the violent persecution and elimination of any opposition. In the 13<sup>th</sup> December 1968, the AI-5 abolished every remaining civil and individual rights; the period between 1968 until 1975 became known as 'the years of lead'. Suely Rolnik describes how the cultural movement managed to resist during the beginning of the dictatorship only to be paralysed by the AI-5: 'As every totalitarian regime, its most ominous effects were not the palpable and visible ones, of imprisonment, torture, repression and censorship, but rather the more subtle and invisible: the paralysis of the creative force and the subsequent frustration of the collective intelligence, under the terrifying threat of a punishment that could lead to death. One of the most tangible effects of this blockage was the occurrence of psychotic episodes in many young people, specially those whose creative force was "healthy" in the sense that Lygia Clark gave to this adjective'; in the original version, 'Como todo regime totalitário, seus efeitos mais nefastos não foram aqueles, palpáveis e visíveis, de prisão, tortura, repressão e censura, mas outros, mais sutis e invisíveis: a paralisia da força de criação e a frustração subsequente da inteligência coletiva, por ficarem associadas à ameaça de um castigo que pode levar à morte. Um dos efeitos mais tangíveis de tal bloqueio foi justamente o de ter provocado episódios psicóticos em muitos jovens, principalmente naqueles cuja força de criação era "saudável" no sentido que Lygia atribui a este adjetivo' (Clark, 2005, p. 26).

came from the cultural milieu of the time<sup>126</sup>, as a therapeutic setting that helped them through their psychotic episodes. Remarking that the 'experience of the "full-void"' was a kind of ritornello punctuating the whole of Lygia Clark's work, Suely Rolnik refers a 'tolerance to the void of the dissolution of forms' as the condition that enables such an experience, and opportunely quotes the musician and composer Jards Macalé when he recalls the artist's words during her sessions with him:

Whenever you feel empty, don't fight against the void. Don't fight against anything. Let yourself remain empty. Little by little you'll be filled until you get back to the normal state of the human being, which is the creative state (Clark, 2005, p. 23)<sup>127</sup>.

#### ARCHAIC IMAGERY OF A BOND OF COSMOLOGICAL ORGANIC SOLIDARITY

The *Estruturação do Self* is settled on the comprehensive knowledge that resulted from Lygia Clark's experimental practice with the body. Her research encompassed the course of her inner experiences and, to a great extent, her work aimed at prompting, conveying and ultimately sharing those experiences, by arising them in others. Throughout the several phases of her research, the development of objects and of experiments with those objects brought a growing understanding of the implication of the body, as she enacted intuitions that regarded her own psycho-physiological life, set them out for others, and learned

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<sup>126</sup> Explaining Clark's preference for borderline or psychotic cases, as well as her reluctance to treat neurotic conditions, Suely Rolnik writes: 'Not by chance, the majority of her clients came from the cultural milieu of the time, although seldom from the universe of the fine arts or of the therapeutic practices, that kept a suspicious distance from the experimental production of the artist, especially the *Estruturação do Self* (Clark, 2005, p. 16).

<sup>127</sup> In the original version, 'Quando você se sentir vazio, não lute contra o vazio. Não lute contra nada. Deixe-se ficar vazio. Aos poucos você vai se preenchendo até voltar ao estado normal do ser

from their participation and responses. Remarking that Lygia Clark's work remained an artistic structure, Guy Brett wrote:

Its poetry lies in its economy, its lightness, and its avoidance of all turgidity, obscurantism, dogma, lugubriousness, and literalness (Brett, 2004, p. 47).

This consistency of purpose in Clark's work gives evidence of the 'teleological directedness of everything psychic' (Jung, 1990, p. 3): the artist was always very attentive and truthful to her inner happenings, such as insights, dreams or living experiences ('vivências'), many of them involving generation, creation, growth, transformation, or decay, death, and regeneration – 'visionary journeys' that she extensively narrated, and coherently retold, in her writings (Carneiro, 2004, p. 98)<sup>128</sup>. Lygia Clark said that she started working with art to overcome the crisis that followed the birth of one of her sons (Clark, 1997, p. 270)<sup>129</sup>, and also that working with art had 'saved her from the hospice' (Clark, 2005, p. 60)<sup>130</sup>.

Meanwhile, each successive cycle of her work would be announced by intense psycho-physiological crises:

Everytime I start a new phase of my work, I feel all the symptoms of pregnancy. As soon as the gestation begins, I suffer from true

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humano que é o criativo'.

<sup>128</sup> According to Beatriz Scigliano Carneiro, the artist kept a diary, since 1953, 'replete of analysis on her work, her therapeutic process and her visionary journeys generically called dreams'; in the original version, '... mantendo desde 1953, um diário, repleto de análises sobre o seu trabalho, seu processo terapêutico e suas jornadas visionárias denominadas genericamente de sonhos'.

<sup>129</sup> *Pensamento mudo* (*Mute Thought*), '... I see my case, in which also the making of art was to survive the crisis of the birth of my son Eduardo and now, that I gave up making the art that taught me how to live, I am learning, more mature, the meaning of life itself without the need to formulate anything else'; in the original version, '... vejo o meu caso em que também fazer arte foi para sobreviver à crise do nascimento de Eduardo e agora, que deixo de fazer a arte que me ensinou a viver, aprendendo, mais madura, o significado da vida em si mesma sem sentir necessidade de formular mais nada'.

<sup>130</sup> See note 113. Lygia Clark also stated that she had been regarded as psychotic and that she hadn't been interned out of pure luck: 'I understand any "raving loony", because I am deeply crazy as well. A crazy organized woman, balanced, but crazy. And I doubt that a very straight person called neurotic can understand this clinical practice'; in the original version, 'Eu, por exemplo, já passei por neurótica na minha vida e não fui internada por puro azar... ou pura sorte. Agora, eu entendo qualquer "doido" (entre aspas), porque eu sou profundamente maluca também. Uma maluca organizada, equilibrada, mas maluca. E eu duvido que uma pessoa certinha chamada neurótica possa entender uma clínica dessas'.



physical disturbances, such as dizziness, for instance, up to the moment I am able to state my new space-time in the world (Clark, 1997, p. 151)<sup>131</sup>

introverting oneself to the verge of madness to lay one single egg that has nothing of invented but of thwarted – madness? I don't know. I only know that it is my way of tying myself to the world, being fecundated and ovulating (...) it is such a biological, cellular experience, that it can only be communicated in a cellular, organic way (Clark, 1997, pp. 249-250)<sup>132</sup>.

The crisis of Carboneras, in October of 1970, according to the accounts available, was perhaps the most expressive in archaic content, and the most relevant to the final creative development leading to the *Fantasmática do Corpo* and, ultimately, to the *Estruturação do Self*. It marked the outset of the period of the *Pensamento Mudo* (*Mute Thought*), an important stage in the artist's process of individuation, with the 'integration of the image of the couple', and the 'reassumption of the Self after being "the other"' (Clark, 1998, p. 179)<sup>133</sup>. In all

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<sup>131</sup> *Caminhando* (*Walking*), in the original version, 'Sempre que inicio uma nova fase de meu trabalho, sinto todos os sintomas da gravidez. E logo que a gestação começa, sofro verdadeiras perturbações físicas como a vertigem, por exemplo, até o momento em que consigo afirmar meu novo espaço-tempo no mundo'.

<sup>132</sup> Carta a Mário Pedrosa, 22 de Maio de 1969 (Letter to Mário Pedrosa, 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1969), 'I became conscious that while almost every artist today through themselves up in a process of great extroversion, I, solitary, swallow each time more in a process of introversion, in order to then go through the ovulation which is miserably dramatic, one egg at a time. Afterwards is swallowing up again, introverting oneself to the verge of madness to lay one single egg that has nothing of invented but of thwarted – madness? I don't know. I only know that it is my way of tying myself to the world, being fecundated and ovulating (...) it is such a biological, cellular experience, that it can only be communicated in a cellular, organic way'; in the original version, 'Tomei consciência de que na medida em que quase todos os artistas hoje se vomitam a si mesmos num processo de grande extroversão, eu, solitária, engulo cada vez mais num processo de introversão, para depois fazer a ovulação que é miseravelmente dramática, um ovo de cada vez. Depois é o engolir novamente, introverter-se até quase à loucura para botar um único ovo que nada tem de inventado mas sim de gorado – loucura? Não sei. Só sei que é minha maneira de me amarrar ao mundo, ser fecundada e ovular (...) é uma experiência tão biológica, celular, que só é comunicável também de uma maneira celular e orgânica'.

<sup>133</sup> '... it was as if I found myself again after living "the other" for so long, and today I feel myself!'; in the original version, '... foi como se me reencontrasse depois de viver "o outro" tanto tempo, e hoje me sinto eu mesma!'. "After Carboneras, on the rediscovery of my Self relinquishing being 'the other', all changed in me (...) I started having beautiful dreams with the couple integrative of that image that I had shattered and destroyed so much in childhood (...) peace returned only when I realized that the important was not living that experience in real life, but that living it in the unconscious sufficed"; in the original version, 'Depois de Carboneras, na redescoberta do meu Eu deixando de ser 'o outro', tudo mudou em mim (...) comecei a ter sonhos belíssimos com o casal integrador dessa imagem que for a por mim tão quebrada e destruída na infância (...) a paz só voltou quando me apercebi que o importante não era viver essa experiência

likelihood, this 'psychotic episode' occurred partly as a direct result of the practical bodily experiments of the *Nostalgia do Corpo* (*Longing for the Body*), *A Casa é o Corpo* (*The House is the Body*), and *O Homem, estrutura viva de uma arquitetura biológica e celular* (*Man, living structure of a biological and cellular architecture*), leading to the 'direct triggering of the art-life accomplishment' that took hold of the artist (Clark, 1998, p. 179)<sup>134</sup>. Hence the inner tranquility of the subsequent period, *Pensamento Mudo*, an aftermath of metabolization, of inner resolution lived without formulations or propositions, but nevertheless 'in a state of supersensitivity' (Clark, 1997, p. 270) and 'feverish, electric vitality' (Clark, 1998, p. 179).

An analysis of the imagery reported in the artist's accounts<sup>135</sup> proves revealing.

When I was still in the airplane the first impact was of the soil opening as if it was the beginning of the process of the world (...) During the first night my conscious mind suddenly opened as if it was the soil itself and I had all sort of hallucinations you can imagine. With such violence that I thought I would go mad or die. (...) All around me was the earth in a continuous process of becoming at every instant. (...) Yet the soil carried on as a process and even on the day I left I couldn't stare at it, for everything was moving (Clark, 1998, p. 179).

Introductory to this pivotal 'visionary journey' of the artist, the image of the revolving soil that strikes her while she is still on the airplane, up in the sky, is

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na vida real, mas viver isso no inconsciente já era o suficiente' (Clark, 1998, p. 208); '... recomposing the image of the couple in beautiful dreams as a totality, also trying to assume my Self, no longer being "The other" – after the Carboneras crisis'; in the original version, '... recompondo a imagem do casal em sonhos belíssimos como uma totalidade, procurando também me assumir como Eu, deixando de ser "O outro" – depois da crise de Carboneras' (Clark, 1997, p. 270).

<sup>134</sup> 'After that I ask myself if I still need to make propositions, since what I advocate – art-life – has already been directly triggered in me that night!'; in the original version, 'Depois disso me pergunto se ainda precisarei fazer proposições, pois o que preconizo – arte-vida – já foi 'declanchado' diretamente em mim nessa noite!'

<sup>135</sup> Lygia Clark reported the details of this crisis in a letter to Hélio Oiticica, in 20 October 1970, and also mentioned the crisis in a later letter, of 17 May 1971 (Clark, 1998, pp. 177-180, 208). She also describes the crisis in the text *Da Supressão do Objeto* (*Anotações*) (Clark, 1997, pp. 265-

significant considering her previous insights with the 'polarity earth-space', in which she envisaged man as a 'privileged being, terribly anguished, always being thrown upwards, yet bound by the feet, by the organic side of his animal origin' (Clark, 1997, p. 112)<sup>136</sup>. As a polarity – whereby, in this case, Clark prefigures man's 'search for transcendence' – it expresses, to repeat, the spirit/instinct antithesis, in which 'spiritual' is 'something more than the intellect' (Jung, 1990, p. 55), a term to be understood within the description of psychic processes as having a 'lower part', associated with an 'organic substrate', physiological and instinctual, and an 'upper part', associated with 'will' and the loss of the compulsive dynamics of the instinct.

In addition, while the coupling between Earth and Sky is a widespread primeval motif of the creation of the universe (Eliade, 1971, p. 240), Earth is, in itself, a primary intuition of the foundation of every expression of existence (Eliade, 1971, p. 240). It is a cosmic hierophany, or revelation, not only because of its permanence, size and solidity, and the variety of things it bears, but also because 'all that *is* on earth is united with everything else' in 'existences that reveal themselves directly to man' (Eliade, 1971, p. 243). According to Eliade, the 'cosmological solidarity' (Eliade, 1971, p. 255) between earth, on one hand, and the vegetable, animal and human forms, on the other, has its origin on the feeling of solidarity with the place, the surrounding microcosm, before the physiological causes of conception were known: man was not yet born, for he had not yet realized that he belonged wholly to a biological species he represented, thus living a 'cosmico-maternal' life (Eliade, 1971, p. 244), whereby

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<sup>136</sup> *O Vazio-Pleno*, see Annexes, 'Man has this radiation bigger than that of any object and that of the other animals. It is as if, because he is vertical, he is less setted on earth than the other animals. Therefore, his search for transcendence counterposes that polarity (earth-space) with the stubbornness and the intensity of a privileged being, terribly anguished, always being thrown

the precariousness of human paternity was balanced by the solidarity existing between man and various protective forces or substances in nature (Eliade, 1971, p. 244).

Most remarkably, the 'cosmological solidarity' is also an organic solidarity, a biological unity 'due to the *life* which is the same' in all those forms of existence (Eliade, 1971, p. 255), and which stands for earth's fertility<sup>137</sup> as much as for earth's regenerative attribute: 'Everything that comes from the earth is endowed with life, and everything that goes back into the earth is given new life' (Eliade, 1971, p. 253). This regenerative attribute, 'a magic, sympathetic bond between the earth and the forms it has engendered' (Eliade, 1971, p. 255), is further explained by Eliade in a comparison between the symbolic resonances of water and of earth:

From the first moment when a form emerged from water, every direct organic bond between them was broken; between form and the pre-formal there is a gulf. But there is no such break between the earth and the forms engendered by it; these forms remain bound to their source, from which they are in any case separated only for a time, and to which they will return to rest, to be strengthened, and one day to reappear (Eliade, 1971, p. 255).

And he adds:

The waters are there at the beginning and end of every cosmic cycle; earth is there at the beginning and end of every individual life. (...) Water *precedes* every creation, every form; earth *produces* living forms. (...) Time – which, so to speak, sleeps as far as water is concerned – is alive and active in the earth's engendering. Living forms come and go in lightning speed. But the going is never definitive: the death of living forms is a hidden and provisional mode of existence; the living form as such, as a species, will never disappear till the end of the term allowed to earth by the waters (Eliade, 1971, p. 254).

The revolving soil in Clark's vision is arguably the forewarning of a process of

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upwards, bound by the feet, by the organic side of his animal origin'.

<sup>137</sup> 'Every expression of life is the result of the fertility of the earth' (Eliade, 1971, p. 254).

regeneration concerning her creative drive, whereby the latter is equated to the mothering, fertile and regenerative power of the earth, as well as cosmicized, invested with the organic, biological, sympathetic bond of cosmological solidarity.

The artist also reports the details of her physical disturbance during the comprehensive psycho-physiological process of the crisis:

When I got out of the airplane, I felt an inner heat as if I had swallowed a hot brick, and I felt that an imperious deep internal process of the unconscious had started within me (...) I felt as if all of my bones were twisted inside my body and as if my flesh had been unstuck from them. I came out to the balcony and felt everything as mercury! The water, the air, the sand and each sound I apprehended got into my body with an extraordinary sharpness reaching the bottom of my own self. (...) I spent three nights without sleeping and on the fourth I started yawning and crying of lack of sleep and, feeling that I had entered inside myself again, I slept for real. On the next day, when I saw myself at the mirror, I found in wonder that my face, lost for so long, was there, looking at me, and sweet as it had never been... (Clark, 1998, pp. 177-179)<sup>138</sup>.

The combination of these elements – inner heat, dismemberment, and acquisition of a new sensitivity or new sense-experience – coincides with the structure of initiatory ordeals, for example, in shamanic vocations, as the ailment leading up to an ontological mutation that consecrates the ‘elect’. According to Eliade, the pattern of such afflictions, involving a ‘total crisis’ or ‘psychic chaos’ (Eliade, 1977, p. 79), and the imminence of death or of madness (Eliade, 1989, p. 33), not only recalls the symbolic death represented in almost all initiations (Eliade, 1989, p. 33), but also the symbolic return to chaos that is indispensable to any new

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<sup>138</sup> In the original version: ‘Quando desci do avião senti um calor interno como se tivesse engolido um tijolo quente e senti que havia começado em mim um processo interno imperioso e profundo do inconsciente. (...) ...senti como se todos os meus ossos estivessem torcidos dentro do meu corpo e como se a minha carne estivesse se descolando dos mesmos. Saí para a varanda e senti tudo como mercúrio! A água, o ar, a areia e cada som que apreendia entrava no meu corpo com uma agudeza tão extraordinária que ia até ao fundo de mim mesma. (...) Passei três noites sem dormir e na quarta comecei a bocejar e a chorar de tanto sono e senti que tinha entrado dentro de mim outra vez e dormi pra valer. No dia seguinte, quando me vi ao espelho, descobri maravilhada

creation (Eliade, 1977, p. 79). The pattern of initiatory death 'is a sign that the profane man is on the way to dissolution, and that a new personality is about to be born' (Eliade, 1977, p. 80). Inner heat, or 'psychic heat' (Eliade, 1977, p. 92), in itself, is an extremely archaic experience, and expression, of magico-religious power (Eliade, 1995, p. 85), for heat, or rage, is a kind of power in a 'crude' state and, as it were, 'violent and excessive increase in *power* are feared by the majority of mankind' (Eliade, 1990, p. 333). At the same time, inner heat is identified with the impact of the awakening and ascension of the *kundaliní* energy, whose course up the central nervous system is primarily manifested through a burning on the torso (Eliade, 1990, p. 246)<sup>139</sup>. While heat is the 'syndrome of the appropriation of a sacrality', inner heat is 'always connected with reaching a particular ecstatic state or, on other cultural levels, with reaching an unconditioned state' (Eliade, 1990, p. 332). Dismemberment, or otherwise reduction to the state of a skeleton, is another widespread motif (Eliade, 1995, p. 91)<sup>140</sup> of rebirth, or 'revivification' (Eliade, 1995, pp. 92-93), a symbolic complex centred in the idea of life as a perpetual renewal (Eliade, 1977, p. 82):

Bone symbolizes the final root of animal life, the mold from which the flesh continually arises. It is from the bone that men and animals are reborn (...) they return to the inexhaustible fount of cosmic life, and the skeleton is brought back to life by being given new flesh (Eliade, 1995, pp. 92-93).

This revivification brings

a "sensitivity" not attainable at the level of ordinary experience'; through it 'the "elect" becomes "another" (...) not only dead and reborn, but *born to existence*, which, while it is lived to all appearances in this world of ours, is framed in other existential dimensions (Eliade,

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que minha cara, que há muito havia perdido, estava lá, olhando para mim e doce, Hélio, como nunca havia sido...

<sup>139</sup> 'The awakening of the *kundaliní* arouses an intense heat, and its progress through the *chakras* is manifested by the lower part of the body becoming as inert and cold as a corpse, while the part through which the *kundaliní* passes is burning hot'.

<sup>140</sup> '... the dismemberment pattern is found almost everywhere'.

1977, pp. 80-81).

The acquisition of a new sensitivity, 'a state higher than "profane sensibility"' (Eliade, 1977, p. 84), creates a sensory condition that is wide-open (Eliade, 1977, p. 85), giving evidence to the ontological mutation that follows the experience of 'death and resurrection'. However, still according to Eliade, the initiatory sickness of a medicine man does not define him as a sick man, for 'he is, above all, a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself' (Eliade, 1989, p. 27) and, therefore, is able to cure others, because he knows the mechanism, or rather, the *theory* of illness (Eliade, 1977, p. 31). Seen through the symbolic complex of initiatory death or initiatory sickness, Lygia Clark's crisis can be regarded as the psycho-physiological ordeal inherent to the retrieval of a deep inner knowledge that has a double validity: on one hand, it is self-revealing, self-organizing and self-healing (Clark, 1998, p. 180)<sup>141</sup>, and, on the other hand, due to a sensed universal authenticity, it is meant to be enacted upon others, even if by intuitive, exploratory means<sup>142</sup>. During the subsequent experimental phase of her work, the *Fantasmática do Corpo*, at the Sorbonne, Lygia Clark guided the participants to the 'morcellement' of the body, its ensuing reconstruction and eventual integration, aware of the instrumentation and implications of each of the different stages as parts of a comprehensive whole sequence.

Other elements on the accounts of this crisis coincide with the structure of

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<sup>141</sup> '... that night, which could have unstructure any person, was the opposite for me, I came out of it more structured than I have ever been and I closed a cycle...'; in the original version, '...essa noite que poderia desestruturar qualquer pessoa para mim foi o oposto, saí dela mais estruturada do que jamais fui e fechei um ciclo...'.  
<sup>142</sup> On the documentary about the *Estruturação do Self*, Lygia Clark. *Memória do Corpo*, directed by Mário Carneiro, Lygia Clark states that 'after nine years, only now the theory of the work starts to lightly come up (...) a cannibalistic theory'; in the original, 'em 9 anos, agora é que a teoria do trabalho começou a despontar levemente (...) teoria canibálica'.

initiation of a 'medicine man'. The presence of animals, in this case, goats, standing for the 'aiding animal', arguably representative of the ontological mutation, of the new sense-experience and set of abilities related with the 'cosmological sympathetic bond' with every living form: the medicine man understands 'languages' other than the human, living in an existential condition closer to the creative manifestation; this was an attribute of mankind before the acquisition of language, the event that separated man from all the other living forms and withdrew him from an immediate contact with the source of creation (Eliade, 1989, pp. 93-99)<sup>143</sup>. The duration of the crisis, in this case, three days and three nights, is the common duration of a 'spontaneous initiation', that is, when the vocation of the medicine man is not hereditary or when he has not been appointed by the community<sup>144</sup>. One significant image is referred as the vision that initiates the hallucinatory state that would keep the artist awake: 'On that first night, the hallucination started and I saw an ultra-archaic phallic form' (Clark, 1998, p. 178), an insight that reinforces the symbolic complex of the creative potency.

The Carboneras crisis, let us recall, was followed by the *Pensamento Mudo*

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<sup>143</sup> 'In numerous traditions friendship with animals and understanding their language represent paradisaical syndromes. In the beginning, that is, in mythical times, man lived at peace with animals and understood their speech. It was not until after a primordial catastrophe, comparable to the "Fall" of Biblical tradition, that man became what he is today – mortal, sexed, obliged to work to feed himself, and at enmity with the animals (...) From the most distant times almost all animals have been conceived either as psychopomps that accompany the soul into the beyond or as the dead person's new form. Whether it is the "ancestor" or the "initiator master", the animal symbolizes a real and direct connection with the beyond. In a considerable number of myths and legends all over the world the hero is carried into the beyond by an animal. It is always an animal that carries the neophyte into the bush (the underworld) in its back, or hold him in his jaw, or "swallows" him to "kill and resuscitate him", and so on (...) [succeeding] in sharing in the animal mode of being (...) re-establishes the situation that existed *in illo tempore*, in mythical times, when the divorce between man and animal had not yet occurred'.

<sup>144</sup> From Eliade's selection of accounts, in several of his works, of shamanic vocations and their 'psychopathology', a majority of initiatory sicknesses last for three days and three nights: '... as a rule the future shaman "dies" and lies in the yurt for three days without eating or drinking' (Eliade, 1989, p. 36); '... the future shaman remained unconscious for three days and so nearly dead that on the third day he was almost buried' (Eliade, 1989, p. 39).



period, during which Lygia Clark did not actually create (Clark, 1997, p. 276)<sup>145</sup>, and instead allowed for her inner processing to take place by means of powerful archaic imagery. From her accounts of this period two aspects stand out – the merging of times and the 'integration of the couple' – both insights symbolically describing the return to the 'completeness that precedes all creation' (Eliade, 1990, p. 271), in complementary ways. Coherently following the imagery of cosmological organic solidarity and biological unity by which her own creative drive is put through, the insight of the merging of times brings the artist beyond historical time, actualizing the foundation of the biological species she belongs to, contemporaneous with that primordial moment:

I feel I am the cauldron of spunk itself, processing; I feel entirely there up to the time before birth and I think that it is this merging, in which so much the girl appears, as the milk in the feeding bottle, the adulterous-adult, the madwoman, the five thousand year old woman, the balanced one whom being present is never only one, and the consciousness is not of glueing pieces that were broken with a sense of guilt, but of recreating oneself whole from new ancient experiences as birth itself, or even before (...) The discovery never ends and sometimes I think that living one life is living all the previous phases of mankind (Clark, 1997, p. 277)<sup>146</sup>.

It becomes clearer her intuition that creation, as a primordial factor, remits to the dissolution of historical time and that, as an ontological factor, is both unifying (uniting the phases of existence) and cosmicizing (going beyond the present existence). The integration of the couple falls into the category of the

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<sup>145</sup> Paris, 17 May 1971, '... I went to Holland, to Utrecht, to make the propositions and made some cash; they filmed it all but the communication was a total crap. I returned in a great crisis, because if I don't create anymore and on top of that I can't communicate what I've created, that is too much!'; in the original version, '... fui à Holanda, a Utrecht, para fazer as proposições e ganhei gaita; filmaram tudo mas a comunicação foi uma merda total. Cheguei numa grande crise, pois já não crio mais e se não consigo nem comunicar o que já fiz é demais!'

<sup>146</sup> In the original version, 'Me sinto como o caldeirão da própria porra, processo; me sinto toda lá até antes do nascer e acho que é esse misturar, onde ora aparece a menina, o leite na mamadeira, a adulta-adúltera, a louca, a velha de cinco mil anos de idade, a atual, a equilibrada que sendo atual nunca é uma só e a consciência não é de colar pedaços que foram quebrados com culpabilidade, mas o recriar-se inteira a partir de novas experiências antigas como o próprio nascer, ou até antes. (...) A descoberta nunca pára e às vezes penso que viver uma vida é viver todas as fases

'conjunction of the opposites':

... I started having beautiful dreams with the couple (...) I realized that the important thing was not living that experience in real life, but that living it in the unconscious would suffice (Clark, 1997, p. 278)<sup>147</sup>.

Also in continuity with the symbolic complex of organic solidarity, it is easy to recognize on the image of the couple the two energetic polarities – negative and positive, respectively corresponding to the feminine and the masculine poles – that regulate biological life, a subtle psycho-physiological process that occurs permanently, albeit unconsciously, and which remains undetermined to the conventional knowledge of the human body. Clark's insight towards a resolution of the fundamental duality of biological life, integrating the opposites by means of 'the couple'<sup>148</sup>, is significant not only because it reiterates the sympathy between creation as a primordial factor and as a biological human occurrence, but also because of its ultimate validity: the return to the primeval unity

which signifies not the chaos that existed before any forms were created but the undifferentiated *being* in which all forms are merged (Eliade, 1971, p. 420).

Also momentous for Lygia Clark's inner processing, as well as for the understanding of the *Estruturação do Self*, is the archaic imagery brought forward during her sessions with Pierre Fedida, from 1972 to 1974, that she called 'hallucinatory living experiences of a super-archaic world' (Clark, 1998, p. 245)<sup>149</sup>. By the end of 1974, as a result of her inner exploration, the artist proclaimed: 'I begin to feel I am the owner of a knowledge; that is, after I elaborated my almighty vitality that, at bottom, was the assertion of my extreme

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anteriores da humanidade'.

<sup>147</sup> See note 134.

<sup>148</sup> See note 62.

<sup>149</sup> In the original version, '... vivências alucinatórias de um mundo ultra-arcaico'.

impotence" (Clark, 1998, p. 249)<sup>150</sup>. On the available accounts of this stage, Lygia Clark identifies successive phases, consisting of different figurations and specific developments around the two opposite polarities and their psycho-physiological resolution, hence her claim that 'all is libido, all is sensation' and that her 'process, that is all erotic, is a passage to [her] inter-relationship with the real and, beyond that, to the cosmogony. A Tantric process, rather than occidental' (Clark, 1998, p. 248)<sup>151</sup>. While Lygia Clark mentions that, at the very beginning of the sessions, she had 'dispossessed herself of all the embodied creatures of childhood, from the serpent to the eagle and the octopus' (Clark, 1998, p. 246), the succession of phases started off, significantly, by what might be explained as a regression on linguistic structures, figured also with animals, to repeat, representatives and facilitators of an existential condition previous to language and closer to the creative manifestation:

Recreating language I saw myself exploring the bottom of the ocean,  
finding out all the creatures that inhabit it and, watching a shoal of  
small fish, I lived them as words (Clark, 1998, p. 245).

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<sup>150</sup> In the original version, 'Começo a me sentir dona de um saber; isso depois de ter elaborado a minha toda poderosa vitalidade que, no fundo, era a afirmação da minha impotência ao extremo'.

<sup>151</sup> Tantrism can be understood as 'continuous process' (Eliade, 1990, p. 202), the word Tantra having, among other meanings, 'what extends the knowledge' (Eliade, 1990, p. 202; Santos, 2003, p. 79). It is a behavioural philosophy of Dravidian origin, from the Indian proto-history (Santos, 2003, p. 79), contemporaneous and correlate of the *Sāmkhya* philosophy (Santos, 2003, p. 79; Eliade, 1990, p. 203; see notes 60, 61 and 62). 'In tantrism, the human body acquires an importance it had never before attained (...) the most reliable and effective instrument at man's disposal for 'conquering death'' (Eliade, 1990, p. 227). Through 'health and strength, interest in a physiology homologizable with the cosmos' (Eliade, 1990, p. 227), 'the purpose of the tantric sādhana [practice] is the reunion of the two polar principles within the disciple's own body' (Eliade, 1990, p. 206). '... the tantric universe is made up of an endless series of analogies, homologies, and symmetries (Eliade, 1990, p. 226) (...) This multilayered homologization must be "realized"; but as a result of the yogic experience, the physical body becomes "dilated", "cosmicized", transubstantiated. The "veins" and "centres" mentioned in the texts refer first of all to states realizable only through an extraordinary amplification of the "sensation of the body"' (Eliade, 1990, p. 236), gradually developed by the use of techniques that aim at both the denser and subtler aspects of every sense, organ, and bodily system. While Lygia Clark perceives her succession of visions and inner transformations as a "Tantric process", she also mentions Pierre Fedida's comment that she had 'maintained the childhood in the body intact'. As a Freudian psychoanalyst, Fedida would predictably identify, to repeat, archaic contents as personal infantile repressed material of a sexual nature, and not as formative principles of instinctual power, emerging as symbolic primordial images, such as it seems to be the case with Lygia Clark,

Afterwards, the phase of the 'discovery of the two sexes, the polarities we all have'. This was followed by the phase of the masculine:

I developed balls (...) one morning very regressed, I felt the mattress as a big body (...) the mattress absorbed the balls, the archaic body where I lived as a child embodying all the forms of adult bodies (Clark, 1998, p. 245).

Immediately after, the phase of the feminine:

I also lived later the "separation" from the body of the mother. I found out that this space had been swallowed by me because I couldn't bear the separation, a fundamental space, since it is through it that we formulate the creation, weaving it as a bridge with the world, hence the reason of the sensation of void and death when, once the work is over, we fall into that abyssal space (Clark, 1998, p. 245).

Then came the phase of the androgyny, of acceptance of the 'so called homosexuality'. This was followed by the phase of the 'blinding white' (Clark, 1998, p. 247), perhaps describing a qualified condition of consciousness acquired with the unification of the polarities:

The white, which is the first living experience of the child, gave me such hallucinations that even my solar system was recreated within my own fantasmagorics (...) The world was stopped, half in the light and half in the shadow. The sun and the moon were also still (...) the vulcanoes started opening and tearing the womb (...) from the fire were born the men and from the sea huge pieces of women's bodies appeared, covered in gelly, remaking themselves, composing themselves: it was bitter (Clark, 1998, pp. 245-247)<sup>152</sup>.

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according to the present research.

<sup>152</sup> In the original version, '... me desapropriei de todos os bichos que havia incorporado em criança, desde a serpente à água e ainda o polvo'; 'Recriando a linguagem me vi explorando o fundo do oceano, descobrindo todos os bichos que o habitam e, a over um cardume de peixinhos, vivi-os como palavras'; 'Vivi também a linda fase da descoberta dos dois sexos, polaridades que todos nós temos'; 'Criei também culhões (...) uma manhã, muito regredida, senti o colchão como um grande corpo (...) o colchão absorveu os culhões, o corpo arcaico onde vivi incorporando quando criança todos os corpos adultos' (...) 'Vivi também mais tarde a "separação" em relação ao corpo da mãe. Descobri que este espaço for a por mim engolido por não poder suportar a separação, espaço fundamental, pois é através dele que formulamos a criação, tecendo-o como ponte com o mundo, e daí o porquê da sensação de vazio e morte quando, a obra acabada, caímos nesse espaço abismal' (...) 'O branco, que é a primeira vivência do corpo da criança, me deu alucinações tais que até o meu sistema solar foi recriado dentro da minha própria fantasmática' (...) 'O mundo estava parado, metade na luz e metade na sombra. O sol e a lua parados também (...) os vulcões começaram a se abrir e rasgar o ventre do medo (que no fundo era eu mesma); do fogo nasceram os homens e do mar enormes pedaços de corpos de mulher apareceram, cobertos de gelatina, se fazendo, se compondo: foi de amargar'.

In the Hindu symbolism, the sun and the moon correspond respectively to the positive, masculine polarity, and the negative, feminine polarity. In this sequence of images, the stillness of the sun and of the moon may well be interpreted as the stillness of the *prāna* in the *nāḍīs idā* and *pingalā*, allowing for the *prāna* to get into the central *nāḍī*, *sushumnā*, with the awakening of the *kundalinī*<sup>153</sup>; the ascension of this 'igneous energy' (DeRose, 2007, p. 637) is manifested not only by a burning, but also by luminous phenomena, hence the term 'illumination' to signify that syndrome. Besides, the image of dismemberment reinforces the idea of an ontological mutation correlate to the unification of the polarities. Finally, the 'phase of the serpent' – the symbol by excellence for the *kundalinī* or *bhujanginī* – consisting of a fable involving a small bird and a serpent, whose archaic content is staggering:

A small bird made a nest on a branch of a tree without knowing that the serpent had its burrow just beside and went away. The serpent gets out of its burrow and catches the two eggs, entering in my vagina, that I called burrow, and makes two ovaries (Clark, 1998, p. 248)<sup>154</sup>,

the left and right ovaries are respectively the reaching points of the *nāḍī idā* and *nāḍī pingalā*, that start respectively on the right and left nostrils;

The small bird made another nest and put two other eggs. The serpent comes out of my vagina and tries to grab them. The small bird, that had two pockets, put them there (balls), and the fight between the two serpents began, a fight of life or death; notice that the small bird was already a penis with the two balls (Clark, 1998, p. 248)<sup>155</sup>,

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<sup>153</sup> See notes 59 to 62.

<sup>154</sup> In the original version, 'Um passarinho fez um ninho num galho de uma árvore sem saber que a serpente tinha a toca do lado e foi passear. A serpente sai do seu ninho e apanha os dois ovos, entrando na minha vagina, que chamei de toca, e faz dois ovários'.

<sup>155</sup> In the original version, 'O passarinho fez outro ninho e botou mais dois ovos. A serpente sai da minha vagina e vai apanhá-los. O passarinho que tinha dois bolsos, os colocou dentro (culhões), e começou a briga das uas serpentes, luta de vida ou morte; repare que o passarinho era já o pênis com os dois culhões'.

thus, a winged phallus – here, the theme of the two polarities, the two fighting serpents, is superposed with the *yôni-linga* opposites, vagina and phallus representing respectively the negative and positive polarities;

Then I saw that I was standing with my head down and my legs were pointing up. I jumped and fell sitting down. The legs were the roots of the tree of life (Clark, 1998, p. 248)<sup>156</sup>,

the tree of life is a primordial image of the 'centre of the world', or 'axis mundi', the place where man transcends its organic nature, climbing beyond the limits of the conditioned consciousness<sup>157</sup>.

#### THE “ESTRUTURAÇÃO DO SELF”: REVERTING THE SYMPTOM INTO SYMBOL

Equally important to the process of definition of the *Estruturação do Self*, besides the consolidation, with the analysis with Fedida, of Lygia Clark's knowledge about an embodied archaic imagery, are the relaxation techniques that the artist sought after that period of analysis. With the sessions with Mme. Karlicow 'she learned more about how to touch the body and found a language more adequate to her work', and with the Sapir method she learned verbal inductions, which she would eventually discard in order to 'enter the pre-verbal':

The difference, for me, between the analysis that I had done with Pierre Fedida prior to the relaxation is that in the analysis there is a “transcendent” process and in the relaxation it is “immanent”. For example: with Fedida I would see an enormous sun that warmed my

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<sup>156</sup> In the original version, 'Aí vi que estava de cabeça para baixo e que as pernas estavam para cima. Deu um salto e caí sentada. As pernas eram raízes da árvore da vida'.

<sup>157</sup> The inverted position can also be seen as both a concrete and a symbolic representation of the inversion of the psychophysiological processes, which is a key aspect of tantric *sādhana* (practice). See notes 59 to 61.

entire womb, in the relaxation I felt this same sun "inside" my womb, from where it generated the heat (Ferreira, 1996, p. 8)<sup>158</sup>.

In the sessions of the *Estruturação do Self*, comfortably laid down on the *Grande Colchão* (*Big Mattress*)<sup>159</sup>, the client was induced into a receptive, inward state of relaxation, that the artist would then utilize, by means of the *Objetos Relacionais*, for a regressive journey on the deep organic grounds where buried embodied insights waited to be unravelled; towards the end of the session the client would gradually be brought back to the normal state of wakefulness. The induction consisted of massages on the head, face, shoulders, forearms, with the hands, and throughout the whole body with specific *Objetos Relacionais*, such as a plastic bag with water, whose sounds and gentle compression would smooth out the tension. In order for the client to gain introversion, Clark would place two big shells, one in each ear, and an appropriate *Objeto Relacional* over the eyes<sup>160</sup>. With the most prevailing senses softened, the client would be briefly but fully massaged with a plastic bag filled with air, bringing the awareness to the comprehensive scale of both the surface of the skin and the density of the vital space, where the subsequent sensory stimulation is to fall on. Following different sequences according to each patient, each session or each specific circumstance, Clark would then use the *Objetos Relacionais*, manipulating and placing them criteriously over the client's body; eventually, she would stop and remain still

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<sup>158</sup> She would reiterate this comparison when noting a comment of one of her clients: 'Based on what he was experiencing, according to him, he provided me with a name for my work: relactation. He also referred the difference he found between an analysis – that would be the baby bottle – and my work – that would be the breast (I found that to be a quite subtle observation, from what I know of my work: experiencing the body in a concrete way, not in a virtual way, the traumas, etc.; in the same manner, to feed is also more intense, as it encompasses the joint collaboration with people, instead of letting them do it alone' (Ferreira, 1996, p. 260).

<sup>159</sup> Big size pillow of transparent plastic, filled with tiny spheres of polystyrene, covered by a loose bed sheet, on which the client would lie down during the entire session (Clark, 2005, p. 15).

<sup>160</sup> Lygia Clark uses the Portuguese term 'interioridade', 'innerness' (in *Lygia Clark. Memória do Corpo*, video-documentary by Mário Carneiro, 1984). A part of these objects were made of a cotton fabric filled with different kinds of materials, varying in texture and weight and, most of

and quiet for a long time ('silence sews one'<sup>161</sup>). After this stage, the different outcomes would determine different continuations, which included brief verbal exchanges, the dripping of water or honey on the lips, followed by the warming of the lips with a light, and further manipulation of other *Objetos Relacionais*, closing with the placing of a light bed sheet, that covered both the whole body and the objects. Preparing the return of the client from the state of relaxation, Clark would produce a rattling noise, increasingly louder and closer, by crossing the space of the room with a tray of small shells, which she would then drop over the client's body, into a state of further awareness. After removing the sheet, one final sequence would take place with another set of *Objetos Relacionais*, with the production of sounds and touches with the hands, ending with the use of the *Manta (Blanket)*<sup>162</sup>, in another brief and full massage, after which the client would stretch into wakefulness<sup>163</sup>. The last part of the session was the optional bursting, by the client, of a plastic bag filled with air, while Clark cuddled the client's head, 'to ease the guilt'; she would then hand out a new plastic bag for the client to fill with air:

it is as if the person had two supports, because on the moment the person destroys the object I remain whole and I am not destroyed, and on the moment that the person destroys me virtually, the object remains whole<sup>164</sup>.

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them, sewn in two halves, had contrasting fillings.

<sup>161</sup> See note 11.

<sup>162</sup> A large size white cotton pillow filled with polystyrene small spheres.

<sup>163</sup> The video-documentary *Lygia Clark. Memória do Corpo* (Mário Carneiro, 1984) shows a pseudo-session with art critic Paulo Sérgio Duarte, to whom the artist commands in the end: 'Stretch yourself like an animal', in the original version: 'Espicha feito um bicho'. The description presented here is based on that pseudo-session.

<sup>164</sup> *Lygia Clark. Memória do Corpo* (Mário Carneiro, 1984), in the original version, '... é como se a pessoa tivesse dois suportes, porque no momento em que ela destroi o objecto eu estou inteira e não sou destruída, e no momento que ela me destroi virtualmente, o objecto continua inteiro'. Concerning this detail, Lygia Clark also wrote: 'When the subject blows the bag he lives the 'ambivalence' in relation with the object. In the destruction, the "relational object" is a receptacle to receive the attacks of the subject, not as a partial object (cf. Melanie Klein) but still in a non-differentiation'; in the original version, 'Quando o sujeito estoura o saco vivencia a 'ambivalência' em relação ao objeto. Na destruição, o "objeto relacional" é um receptáculo para receber os ataques do sujeito, não como um objeto mesmo parcial (cf. Melanie Klein) mas ainda na indiferenciação' (Clark, 1997, pp. 321-322).



However ambivalent, the influence of the elements taking part in the process – the client, the artist, the objects – shows primarily a subjective permeability that, while intuitively managed by Clark from the standpoint that there should be 'an affective engagement of the mediator' (Clark, 1997, pp. 321-322)<sup>165</sup>, it was also rightly asserted as a technical resource, as the object *Prova do Real* (*Proof of the Real*) demonstrates: a small stone involved in a red embroidered fabric, that Clark put in the client's hand to hold throughout the whole session,

I put it in the hand of the person and it avoids that the person has a great regression, because the person is neither what is happening, the fantasmagorics the person is living, nor myself (Clark, 1997, pp. 321-322)<sup>166</sup>.

The avoidance of language in favour of a direct contact with the body is, therefore, a defining factor of the *Objetos Relacionais*. The objects that Lygia Clark created and used from 1965 onward bore a plain plastic content, and depended on an experimental bodily approach to set off the suggestive power of their poetic potential, which she liked to call magic (Ferreira, 1996, p. 262)<sup>167</sup>. The origin of the concrete allure and protean serendipity of the *Objetos Relacionais* can be traced back to *Caminhando* (1963), the act of cutting along a

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<sup>165</sup> Lygia Clark mentioned the 'affective engagement' in the same context she uses the winnicottian concept of the 'good mother': 'The "estruturação do self" consists in a massive maternalization; to establish between the mediator and the subject, in real and symbolical way, a relationship similar to the one that exists between a "good mother" and her son. (...) It is about understanding the fundamental needs of the subject and attend to them through the contact with the body and not through the classical analytical interpretation. This obviously implies an affective engagement of the mediator'; in the original version, 'A "estruturação do self" consiste numa maternalização maciça; estabelecer entre o mediador e o sujeito, de um modo real e simbólico, uma relação análoga à que existiria entre uma "boa mãe" e o seu filho. (...) Trata-se de compreender as necessidades fundamentais do sujeito e responder a elas através do contacto com o corpo e não da interpretação analítica clássica. Isto implica evidentemente um engajamento afetivo do mediador'.

<sup>166</sup> In the original version, '... coloco na mão da pessoa e evita que a pessoa tenha uma grande regressão, porque ela não é nem o que está acontecendo, nem a fantasmática que a pessoa está vivendo, e nem sou eu'.

<sup>167</sup> December 12<sup>th</sup>, 1976, 'At the end, he told me that I was a sort of sorcerer and that my work was magic and that the sorcerer was a kind of psychoanalyst. I admitted how I loved the word

Moebius stripe, in which the attributes of the object served primarily the purpose of a transient personal experience<sup>168</sup>. With these resolutions the artist managed to withdraw from a disciplinary framing within the codified languages of art, and discharged the object, in itself, of iconographic binding, directing onto its role in the actual experience, where sense should henceforth be grasped. In 1968, in one of her letters from Paris, Lygia Clark told Hélio Oiticica how she collected stones from the streets and used everything that fell on her hands, such as empty potato and onion bags, plastic rugs from laundry and plastic gloves used for dying the hair (Clark, 1998, p. 36)<sup>169</sup>. By then Hélio Oiticica had already known the reality of the Mangueira slum and developed his Parangolé experiment, which was part of his search for the 'structure of the object', a quest supported by the examples of 'popular constructive primitivism' and its 'primary constructive nuclei with a defined spatial sense, a totality' (Oiticica, 1986, pp. 66-67). On a previous letter to Oiticica, Clark had said: 'the art defended by Restany is a dead art (...) absolutely a different kind of naturalism of a very bad quality' (Clark, 1998, p. 34)<sup>170</sup>. While Clark detaches her research from the residual semantics of the French Nouveaux Réalism, in his reply Oiticica further distinguishes it from the Italian Arte Povera, saying that the collecting of stones did not stand for a 'ridiculous demagogic poverty':

the so-called Italian *povera arte* is made with the most advanced

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magic, which was mistier and richer than any other, even if more scientific'.

<sup>168</sup> Exceptionally in this case, after being cut the object would become something else, useless for a repetition of the experience. It is possible to find the resonance of the remnants of the *Caminhando* stripes in the round topological straps that Lygia Clark developed from 1963 to 1965, which she named *Trepantes* (*Graspers*).

<sup>169</sup> In the original version, 'Comecei já a trabalhar catando pedras nas ruas, pois dinheiro não há para comprar material! Uso tudo que me cai nas mãos, como sacos vazios de batatas, cebolas, plásticos que envolvem roupas que vêm do tintureiro, e ainda luvas de plástico que uso para pintar os cabelos!'

<sup>170</sup> In the original version, 'A arte defendida pelo Restany é arte morta: sempre me dá a sensação da própria morte do objeto, do bric-à-brac cheio de vivências de afetividades obscuras e nojentas! (...) Absolutamente é uma outra espécie de naturalismo, de péssima qualidade – não é arte de jeito nenhum'.

means; it is the sublimation of poverty, but in a visual anecdotal way, intentionally poor but in fact very wealthy; it is the assimilation of the remains of an oppressive civilization and its transformation in consumption, the capitalization of the idea of poverty. Conversely, for us, it seems that the economy of elements is directly connected to the idea of structure, to the formation from the beginning, to the non-technical as discipline, to the freedom of creation as a supra-economy, in which the rudimentary element releases open structures (Clark, 1998, p. 54)<sup>171</sup>.

The rudimentary semblance of Lygia Clark's objects eludes the expectations of conventional fruition, thus setting up an experimental mediating function. While some of the objects are portable and kindle specific sensory modalities, the vast majority are wearable, holistic and/or inter-connective<sup>172</sup>.

In the *Estruturação do Self*, the *Objeto Relacional*, as a facilitator in the transient personal experience, 'does not bear specificity in itself', as the artist explained:

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<sup>171</sup> 'Everything in the movie springs from something "open", out of nothing, like the third world, and what you say about the underdeveloped countries is right, and I think that the stones, the little, as all the rest, that you collect on the streets of Paris to make something, is the exact expression of the third world. It is not the ridiculous demagogic advertized poverty, but as a child that sees everything for the first time and it is essential for the discovery of the "sense", to feel and to believe in the existence of the senses (...) the so-called Italian arte povera is made with the with the most advanced means; it is the sublimation of poverty, but in a visual anecdotal way, intentionally poor but in fact very wealthy; it is the assimilation of the remains of an oppressive civilization and its transformation in consumption, the capitalization of the idea of poverty. Conversely, for us, it seems that the economy of elements is directly connected to the idea of structure, to the formation from the beginning, to the non-technical as discipline, to the freedom of creation as a supra-economy, in which the rudimentary element releases open structures'; in the original version, 'Tudo no filme nasce de algo "aberto", do nada, como o terceiro mundo, e o que você diz sobre os países subdesenvolvidos é certo, e creio que as pedras, o pouco como o resto que você cata nas ruas de Paris para fazer algo, é a expressão exacta do terceiro mundo. Não a pobreza demagógica e panfletária, ridícula, mas como uma criança que vê tudo pela primeira vez e é essencial para a descoberta do "senso", sentir e crer na existência dos sentidos (...) a tal povera arte italiana é feita com os meios mais avançados; é a sublimação da pobreza, mas de modo anedótico, visual, propositalmentne pobre mas na verdade bem rica: é a assimilação dos restos de uma civilização opressiva e sua transformação em consumo, a capitalização da ideia de pobreza. Para nós não, parece que a economia de elementos está diretamente ligada à ideia de estrutura, à formação desde o início, à não-técnica como disciplina, à liberdade de criação como a supra-economia, onde o elemento rudimentar já libera estruturas abertas'.

<sup>172</sup> Respectively: portable, the *Luvas Sensoriais* (*Sensorial Gloves*), the *Máscaras Sensoriais* (*Sensorial Masks*), or the *Óculos* (*Glasses*), 1968; wearable and holistic, the *Máscaras Abismo* (*Abyss Masks*), 1968, or the *Camisa-de-Força* (*Straitjacket*), 1969; wearable, holistic and inter-connective, *Diálogo de Mãos* (*Hand Dialogue*), 1966, all of the *Série Roupa-Corpo-Roupa* (*Series Clothe-Body-Clothe*), 1967, *Casal* (*Couple*), 1969, as well as the devices *Arquiteturas Biológicas* (*Biological Architectures*), 1969, and the *Fantasmagorics of the Body*, from 1973 onward.

As its own name says it is defined by the relationship established with the fantasy of the subject. The same object can express different meanings to different subjects at different moments. It is the target of the aggressive and passionate charge of the subject, as the subject ascribes it with meaning, losing the status of simple object in order to, impregnated, be lived as a living part of the subject (Clark, 1997, p. 319)<sup>173</sup>.

On her records of the sessions, besides other references and information, Lygia Clark took written notes of relevant responses of the clients to specific objects, recounting the imagery that emerged with the apprehension of each object, which would be turned into something other than itself, often through archaic images of different types. The available records provide examples of this, such as the following note on 'CASE 33 – M' (Ferreira, 1996, pp. 257-274), taken from a sequence that covers a period of one year of sessions with the 'subject' M.:

I placed on his belly the stocking full of ping-pong balls (with larger balls on one side) and, on his forehead, a shell. He experienced the first material as if it were a three-headed serpent that entered into his belly and nestled on him. He also said, regarding the second material, that he had on his forehead a precious stone, which later transformed into a star – he could even feel its flash as a halo around his head.

The three-headed serpent 'nestled on the belly' may well represent the three subtle conduits – *idá*, *pingalá* and *sushumná* – involved in the ascension of the *kundaliní* energy and the resulting syndrome of 'illumination', referred by M. as 'a halo around the head', yet another example of the emergence of the unconscious, embodied knowledge, reminder of the creative, cosmological teleology of human psychophysiology. The fact that the *Objeto Relacional* becomes 'the target of the aggressive and passionate charge of the subject'

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<sup>173</sup> *Objeto relacional (Relational object)*, in the original version, 'O "objeto relacional" não tem especificidade em si. Como o próprio nome indica é na relação estabelecida com a fantasia do sujeito que ele se define. O mesmo objeto pode expressar significados diferentes para diferentes sujeitos em diferentes momentos. Ele é alvo da carga afetiva e passional do sujeito, na medida em que o sujeito lhe empresta significado, perdendo a condição de simples objeto para, impregnado, ser vivido como parte viva do sujeito'.

suggests that a primary aim of the sessions of the *Estruturação do Self* was to grab hold of this 'charge' and all that it brought:

The process becomes therapeutic with the regularity of the sessions, which enable a progressive elaboration of the fantasmagorics arisen by the potentialities of the "relational objects". By manipulating the "relational object" the subject lives a pre-verbal language. The "relational object" touches directly the psychotic nucleus of the subject. The touch on the body is seized by the psychotic nucleus of the subject adding to the formation of the ego, as this touch is digested, metabolized and transformed in a symbolic equation (...) [the subject] lives concretely his aggressive or loving tendencies in relation to the object (Clark, 1997, p. 320)<sup>174</sup>.

This concise description of the process, issued by Lygia Clark in 1980, bears striking similarities with the Jungian conception of the symbol on the context of the process of individuation.

According to Jung, let us briefly recall, the dynamics of the formation of the symbol consists in the collaboration of two opposite states – the most highly differentiated mental functions and the most primitive levels of the psyche – facing one another in the fullest conscious opposition:

this necessarily entails a violent disunion with oneself, to the point where thesis and antithesis negate one another, while the ego is forced to acknowledge its absolute participation in both (Jung, 1990, p. 290).

Furthermore, Jung distinguishes symbol from symptom: a symptom occurs if one part subordinates the other, creating a product that will account for the predominance of one part, thus constituting the symptom of the suppressed antithesis; the symptom lacks the redeeming effect of the symbol,

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<sup>174</sup> *Objeto relacional em contexto terapêutico* (*The relational object in therapeutic context*), in the original version, 'O processo se torna terapêutico pela regularidade das sessões, que possibilitam a elaboração progressiva da fantasmática provocada pelas potencialidades dos "objetos relacionais". Ao manipular o 'objeto relacional' o sujeito vive uma linguagem pré-verbal. O "objeto relacional" toca diretamente o núcleo psicótico do sujeito. O toque do corpo é apropriado pelo núcleo psicótico do sujeito contribuindo para a formação do ego, toques este digerido, metabolizado e transformado em equação simbólica (...) ele vivencia no concreto as suas tendências agressivas ou

since it fails to express the full right of all parts of the psyche to exist, being a constant reminder of the suppressed antithesis even though consciousness may not take this fact into account (Jung, 1990, p. 290).

The full parity of the opposites attested by the ego's absolute participation on both thesis and antithesis leads to a suspension of the will, causing a damming up of the vital energy, only bearable by the emergence of a new mediatory content – the symbol – charged with the energy created by the tension between the opposites: 'the new content governs the whole attitude, putting an end to the division and forcing the energy of the opposites into a common channel' (Jung, 1990, p. 292).

It seems plausible to identify what Lygia Clark calls the 'psychotic nucleus' of the 'subject' with what Jung calls 'symptom', and likewise regard the role of Clark's 'relational object' as a retriever of what Jung calls the 'suppressed antithesis' – hence the fact that the '[the subject] lives concretely his aggressive or loving tendencies in relation to the object'. During the sessions of the *Estruturação do Self*, through the contact with the 'relational object', the 'suppressed antithesis' would be 'added to the formation of the ego', enabling the participation of the latter in both thesis and antithesis, in full parity, with the re-enactment of the original inner opposition or conflict, which then would be 'metabolized and transformed in a symbolic equation', eventually emerging as a primordial image (Clark, 1997, p. 321-325)<sup>175</sup>. In other words, the *Estruturação do*

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amorosas em relação ao objeto'.

<sup>175</sup> Lygia Clark also called it 'a process of symbolical metabolization': 'The body "appropriates" touches, contacts, of organs of adult bodies, of painful accidents that hit it, of unevennesses in space, of intervals between bodily sensations, good or bad, in a process of symbolical metabolization that will come to constitute the ego'; in the original version: 'O corpo se "apropria" de toques, de contactos, de órgãos dos corpos adultos, de acidentes dolorosos que o atingem, de desnivelamentos dos espaços, de intervalos de sensações corpóreas, boas ou más, num processo de metabolização que vem a constituir o ego', in *Memória do corpo* (*Memory of the body*).

*Self* had the potentiality of transforming the symptom into a symbol, that is, firstly, of reverting the symptom into an active opposite, back to its original polar role in the inner conflict that had prompted as part of the process of individuation. In the *Estruturação do Self* this activation comes as the raw emotional force directed to the *Objetos Relacionais*, aroused by the concrete features of the latter, to be sure, yet only possible through the previously induced state of organic susceptibility. It is likely that the suppression of verbal language, particularly during the initial induction, created the favourable circumstances for purely embodied affects to manifest themselves, organic and raw, a latent counterposing instinctual force. Increasingly embedded in this counterposing instinctual energy, in other words, symbolically charged, the figuration through which the affect surfaced would then evolve in what Lygia Clark described as 'the progressive elaboration of the fantasmagorics' (Clark, 1997, p. 320), comparable to the 'symbolic progression' that occurred with Nise da Silveira's patients.

While intuitively aware of the primordial duality of psychic development, as her writings consistently attest to, it was not until late in her therapeutic practice that Lygia Clark realized how these counterposing forces were to be empirically integrated, as this example shows:

another client of mine (...) was twice submitted to my treatment, because the first time he thought he should look for an analyst to try the verbal. He did it without any result. He returned two years later, completely contaminated and, in six months, he was discharged and he is great. He would bite the heavy object, he would roll it up around his neck and hallucinated that it was his father's cock that was coiled around his neck, but he also saw it as a giant double-headed serpent that swallowed him. (...) Then he felt that a fetus was still stuck inside his belly. I didn't know what it was, nor did him. He had an enormous belly. I lied over his belly, navel against navel, for a long time, and said: 'it is going to pass into my belly, it is going to pass into my belly'. Then, I sucked his navel very much and it was gone. It was necessary that this basic mistake occurred so that I could

guess that it was his feminine part completely splitted from the masculine part and rubbing gently my hand in his belly I said: 'it is going to be integrated, it is not to be thrown out, but integrated'. It was immediately integrated (Clark, 1997, p. 338)<sup>176</sup>.

The double-headed serpent and the union of the masculine and the feminine parts, superposed in this case, reiterate the primordial image of the conjunction of the opposites and all that it stands for, in brief, self-organizing force and self-healing power towards psychic integrity with the full parity of its opposing states – to repeat, the most highly differentiated mental functions and the most primitive levels of the psyche – or raw organic instinct and the opposite, counterposing instinctuality that aims beyond the intellect, accomplishing the program of creative teleology designed to surpass duality itself.

In 1984, on the video-documentary *Lygia Clark. Memória do Corpo*, the artist says that only by then, nine years after she had started the *Estruturação do Self*, the theory of the work was starting to emerge, a Cannibalic Theory, according to her:

when the baby is born, either male or female, on an act of piracy, he takes hold of the vagina of the mother, the matrix, and keeps it to himself (...) and the patients get well, so to speak, in the measure that they become capable of vomiting this vagina. This vagina is not a symbolical vagina of the mother, but a vagina that is in practice their own, with which they have lived, appropriated by them and enjoyed by them (...) I have noticed that there are two types of men, that I have known (...) men in whom the penis is inserted with its root almost into the anus, and men in whom the penis is inserted leaving an interval between its root and the anus, that is a very soft area, a very pleasurable spot, very delicate, very smooth, a place where they

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<sup>176</sup> Letter to Guy Brett, 12<sup>th</sup> October 1983, in the original version: 'Outro cliente meu (...) fez o tratamento comigo duas vezes, pois, na primeira, achava que devia procurar um analista para fazerem o verbal. Ele fez e nada adiantou. Voltou dois anos depois completamente contaminado e, em seis meses, teve alta e está ótimo. Mordia o objeto pesado, enrolava-o no pescoço e alucinava que era o pau do pai que se enroscava no seu pescoço, mas ele o vivenciava também como uma serpente gigantesca de duas cabeças que o engolia. (...) Af, sentiu que restou um feto anquilosado dentro da barriga. Deitei sobre ela, umbigo contra umbigo longo tempo e dizia: "vai passar para a minha barriga, vai passar para a minha barriga". Em seguida, chupei muito o seu umbigo e ele se foi embora. Foi preciso que este erro grosseiro se desse para que eu adivinhasse que era a sua parte feminina completamente 'splitada' da parte masculina e passando com carinho a mão na sua barriga, disse: "vai ser integrada, não é para pôr fora, mas sim integrá-la". Foi integrada na hora'.



enjoy very much being caressed. (...) I believe that there is some relation between this kind of penis and that kind of vagina'.

She further explained that the vagina was localized either on that spot, or embodied like a fetus, but that it needed to be unappropriated and reintegrated. In both situations it is possible to identify the integration of the feminine principle as the core subject in what concern psychic wholeness.

In Lygia Clark's own words, in a letter to Guy Brett in 1983, the *Estruturação do Self* could only have happened in Brazil:

with time, watching the movies they are now making here, I changed my mind concerning a question on art. Language now, in these movies, is Brazilian and they could only have been made in Brazil (...) This means that you were right when you put this problem to me, in a letter, asking my opinion. It is not because of the theme, but because of the language that expresses the theme. It is universal in its quality, but it could only have been born here, this new language. (...) even today, the work of Oiticica, as well as my present work, if we didn't have the roots we have, we wouldn't have done it (Clark, 1997, p. 336)<sup>177</sup>.

Conveyed in different kinds of remarks, in several letters that Lygia Clark wrote between 1968 and 1971 while living in Paris, it is possible to shape her critical view on culture and her longing for a culture that is alive. She stated she was 'convinced that the future belongs to an underdeveloped people' and complained about 'the absolute absence of sense of the people here' (Clark, 1998, p. 38)<sup>178</sup>,

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<sup>177</sup> In the original version: 'com o tempo, vendo o cinema que estão fazendo aqui mudei de ideia a respeito de uma pergunta sobre arte. A linguagem agora, nestes filmes, é brasileira e só no Brasil poderiam ter sido feitos... Isso quer dizer que você tinha razão quando colocou o problema para mim, numa carta, onde me pediu opinião. Não é pelo tema, mas sim pela linguagem que expressa o tema. É universal pela qualidade, mas só aqui poderia nascer esta nova linguagem. (...) mesmo hoje, o trabalho de um Oiticica e também o meu atual, se não tivéssemos as raízes que temos, não o teríamos feito'.

<sup>178</sup> 'I am more and more convinced that the future belongs to an underdeveloped people. The absolute absence of sense of the people here is remarkable. Apart from the France Soir that is the major little newspaper here that slightly reminds our popular newspapers, the rest is silence. Television is a drag, good only to learn geography, which I am doing'; in the original version, 'Estou cada vez mais convencida de que o futuro pertence a um povo subdesenvolvido. A absoluta ausência de sentido do povo aqui é notável. Fora o France Soir que é o maior jornaleco daqui e que lembra um pouco os nossos jornais populares, o resto é silêncio. Televisão chatérrima, só é

reiterating that she found them to be 'dead' (Clark, 1998, p. 181-181, 212)<sup>179</sup>.

Commenting on François Truffaut's film *L'Enfant Sauvage*, she bluntly wrote that 'only the French with their cartesianism could justify a pseudo-recovery of a wonderful wild child who ends up in the suburbs of Paris, neither person nor animal' (Clark, 1997, p. 259)<sup>180</sup>; and proclaiming the vital force of madness she commented:

I have had enough of straight people. I prefer the Engenho de Dentro with a fabulous Rogério Duarte, where Emídio expressed himself or Rafael eats pencils and faeces, yet how wonderful, magistral what he expresses (Clark, 1998, p. 181-182)<sup>181</sup>.

She begged for people, 'What I want is people, regardless of age, colour, nationality, (...) I want people and people is what is important' (Clark, 1998, p.

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boa para aprender geografia, o que ando fazendo'.

<sup>179</sup> 'Back to Paris I returned thin (...) I found everyone just the same, either they hide life or they are dead'; in the original version, 'De volta a Paris vim magra (...) Encontrei toda a gente na mesma, ou escondem a vida ou estão mortos'. Lygia Clark also wrote: 'The crap is general here. There is no people. Everything is Inez Verdaz or still that ham Malraux who invents everyday to decorate Paris. His last invention seems a Russian thing: works of art in the Tube. Got it?'; in the original version: 'Aqui a merda é geral. Não existe povo. Tudo é Inez Verdaz ou ainda o canastrão do Malraux que inventa todos os dias de enfeitar Paris. Sua última invenção parece coisa de russo: obras de arte no Metrô. Morou?' (Clark, 1998, p. 63). See also note 180.

<sup>180</sup> 'I also watched *The Wild Child*, and only the French with all their cartesianism could justify a pseudo-recovery of a wonderful wild child who ends up in the suburbs of Paris, neither person nor animal'; in the original version, 'Vi também *L'Enfant Sauvage*, e só mesmo o francês com todo o seu cartesianismo poderia justificar uma pseudo-recuperação de um maravilhoso bicho-menino que acaba sua vida na subúrbia de Paris sem ser gente, e nem bicho'.

<sup>181</sup> 'When you tell me the horrible things that happened with your friends, I think it is very positive, because it proves that we are the ones who have a lot to tell! Here it is the contrary: all of them are very nice, in their uniform, in need of a madness to take them out of that mediocrity, but noone dares putting their feet out of the blanket, they're all dead! Yours are alive in their madness, in their own extrapolation, and it is out of that that something vital will come and not from here... I have had enough of straight people. I prefer the Engenho de Dentro with a fabulous Rogério Duarte, where Emídio expressed himself or Rafael eats pencils and faeces, yet how wonderful, magistral what he expresses'; in the original version, 'Quando você me conta que coisas horríveis aconteceram com os seus amigos, acho muito positivo, pois prova que é a gente que tem um porrada de coisas para dizer! Aqui é o contrário: todos estão bonzinhos, de uniforme, precisando de uma loucura para tirá-los dessa mediocridade, mas ninguém ousa botar os pés para fora dos cobertores, todos estão mortos! Os seus estão vivos na própria loucura, na própria extrapolção, e é daí que sairá qualquer coisa de vital e não daqui... Ando farta de gente certinha; já peffiro um Engenho de Dentro onde entra um fabuloso Rogério Duarte onde um Emídio se expressou ou um Rafael come lápis e fezes, mas que maravilhoso, o que expressa é magistral'. Lygia Clark repeated in several occasions that she preferred to work with borderline, or psychotics, than with neurotics adding that 'she was convinced that the neurotic is the sick one and the borderline is the healthy one who creates culture'; in the original version, 'Aliás, estou convencida de que o neurótico é que é o doente e o borderline é o sadio que cria a cultura', in: Letter to Guy Brett, Rio de Janeiro, 14 de outubro de 1983 (Clark, 1997, p. 338).

212)<sup>182</sup>, and later said that 'one of her greatest joys in her return to Brazil was walking along Copacabana and feel her body brushing against other people's bodies', and how erroneous was the idea that the French were sensual, remarking that 'Paris was her concentration camp in terms of the body'<sup>183</sup>. Hubert Godard<sup>184</sup>, a Frenchman who examines Lygia Clark's work from the standpoint of the 'subjective sight', that is, as a 'dive into the foregoing sight, the pre-glance, or blind look' (Clark, 2005, p. 73), also finds a unique feature in what he calls the 'Brazilian corporality', in which 'there are less of the staunch icons of corporality', something 'overwhelming to see':

The Brazilian body is a body of fluxes and less a body of images (...) a kind of ability that you can feel in the language, in the music of the language, of the bodies, in the miscegenation. (...) I have travelled a lot in Africa, North America, other places, and I never saw such ability to miscegenate, to mix (Clark, 2005, p. 77).

Godard uses Merleau Ponty's conception of a 'double movement' concerning the use of the senses, 'When I touch the table, at the same time, the table touches me' (Clark, 2005, p. 74), to better explain, within the functioning of the senses, the swapping between objectively perceiving and subjectively apprehending, a core phenomenon in Clark's work, according to him. In all probability, the state of organic susceptibility, central to the sessions of the *Estruturação do Self*, would enhance this transit in bodies already culturally predisposed for modes of flux. And, while these bodies are 'less bodies of images', that is, with 'less staunch

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<sup>182</sup> 'I don't wish to create a new elite. What I want is people, and perhaps I have more sense on the recovered places, looking to give one other to the people. I repeat: what I want is people, regardless of age, colour, nationality, state of mental sanity, bourgeois, proletary, children, it doesn't matter, what I want is people and people is what is important, fuck the system!'; in the original version, 'Não quero criar nova elite. Quero é gente, e talvez nos lugares mais recuperados é que eu tenha mais sentido, procurando dar outro às pessoas. Repito: quero é gente, não importa a cor, idade, nacionalidade, estado de sanidade mental, burgueses, proletários, crianças, não importa, eu quero é gente e gente é que é importante, o sistema que se foda!'

<sup>183</sup> Regina Vater (Brett, 2005, p. 120)

<sup>184</sup> Director for the Dance and Movement Analysis Department of the University of Paris VIII, researcher of the practice and study of movement in its different aspects, from biomechanics,

icons of corporality', their predisposition for modes of flux seems to assist in the emergence of the very primordial images that will empower them to integrate and ultimately surpass duality.

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different body technics, psychology and the aesthetic of human expression.

IMAGES

CHAPTER I



Fig. 1 to 6 – Lygia Clark, *Estruturação do Self* and *Objetos Relacionais* (Clark, 2005, pp. 22-23).



## CHAPTER I

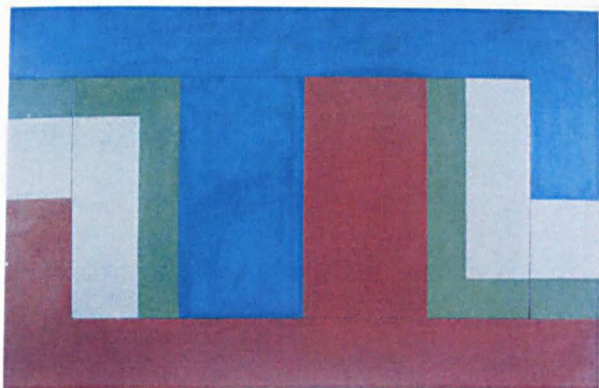


Fig. 7

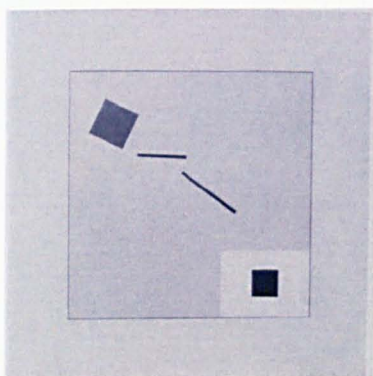


Fig. 8

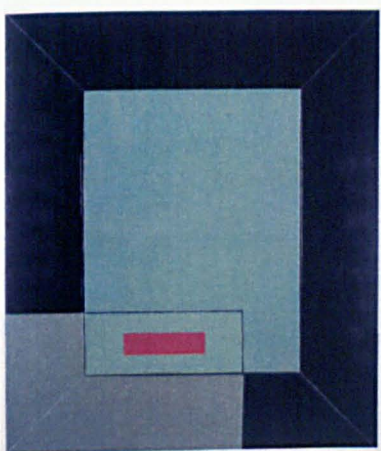


Fig. 9

Fig. 7 – Lygia Clark, *Plane of Modulated Surface nr. 1*, 1955 (Clark, 1997, p. 79).

Fig. 8 – *Discovery of the Organic Line*, 1954 (Clark, 1997, p. 74).

Fig. 9 – *Breaking of the Frame, Composition nr. 5*, 1955 (Clark, 1997, p. 75).

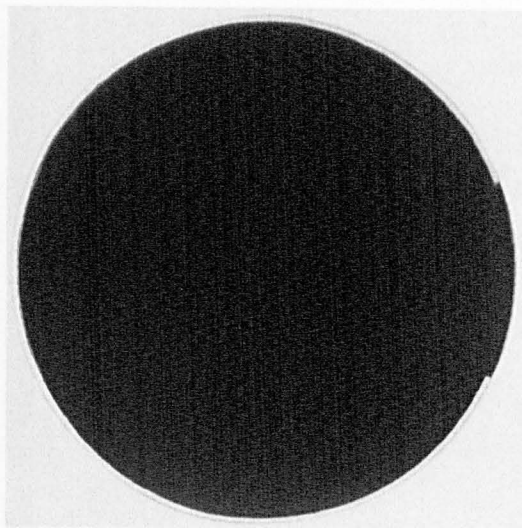
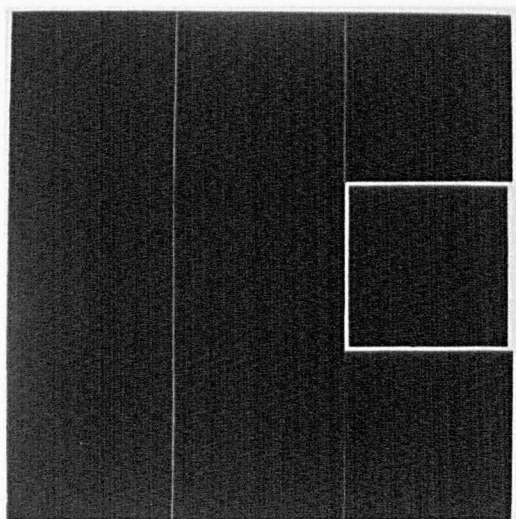


Fig. 10 to 11 – Lygia Clark, *Modulated Space*, 1959; *Linear Egg*, 1958 (Clark, 1997, pp. 100-106).

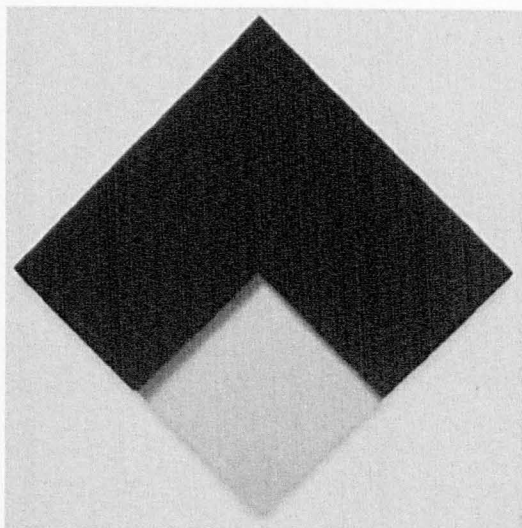
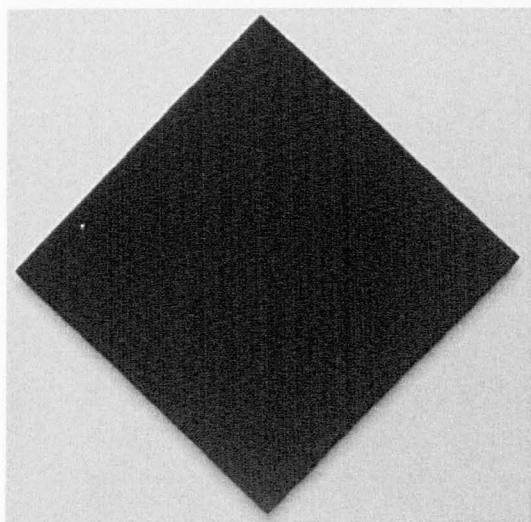


Fig. 12 and 13 – *Counter-Reliefs*, 1959 (Clark, 1997, pp. 100-106).

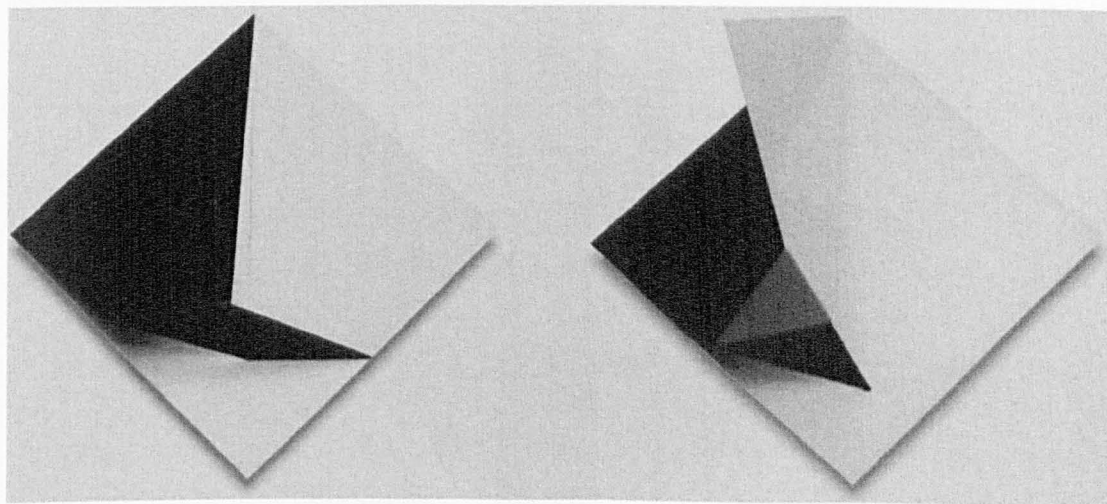


Fig. 14 – *Cocoons*, 1959 (Clark, 1997, pp. 106, 109).

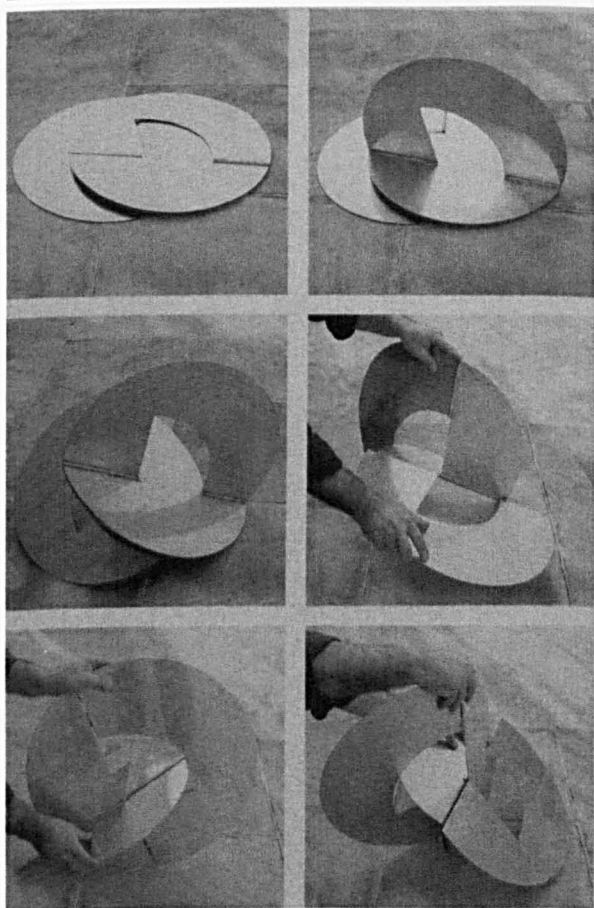
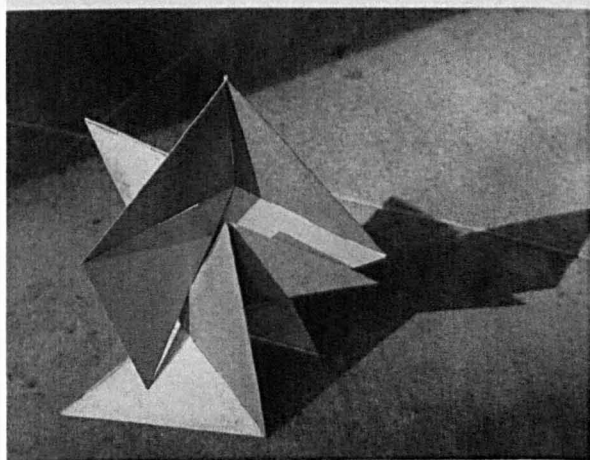
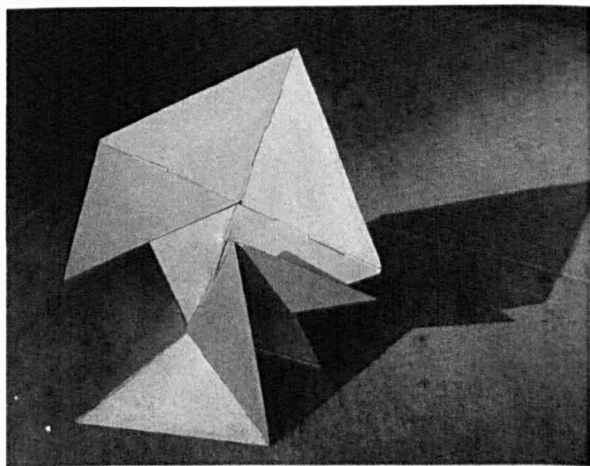


Fig. 15 – *Bichos*, 1960-63; *Project for a planet*, 1963 (Clark, 1997, pp. 131, 133).



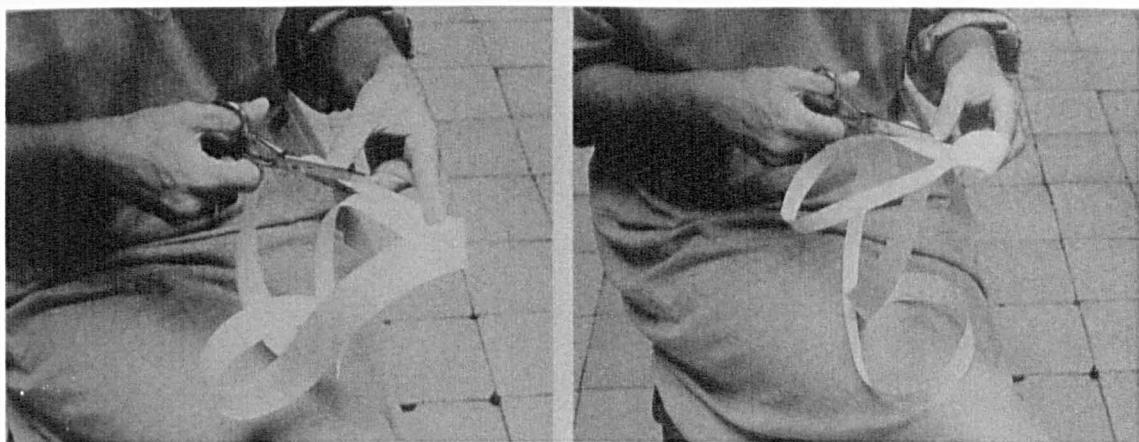


Fig. 16 – *Caminhando (Walking)*, 1963 (Clark, 1997, p. 149).



Fig. 17 – *Collective Body*, 1974 (Clark, 1997, p. 307).

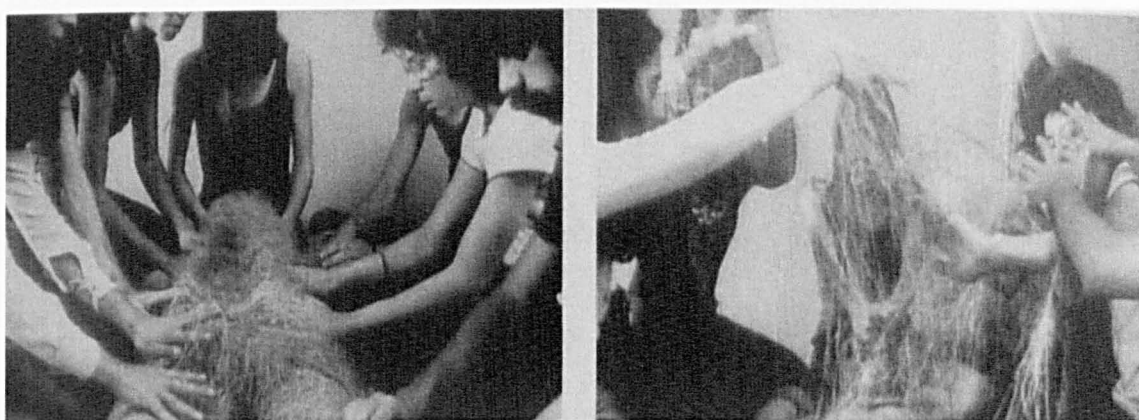


Fig. 18 – *Anthropophagic Drool*, 1973 (Clark, 1997, p. 297).



Fig. 19 – *Longing for the Body*, 1966; *Breathe with me*, 1966; *Stone and air*, 1966; *Dialogue of hands*, 1966 (Clark, 1997, pp. 205, 209, 210).

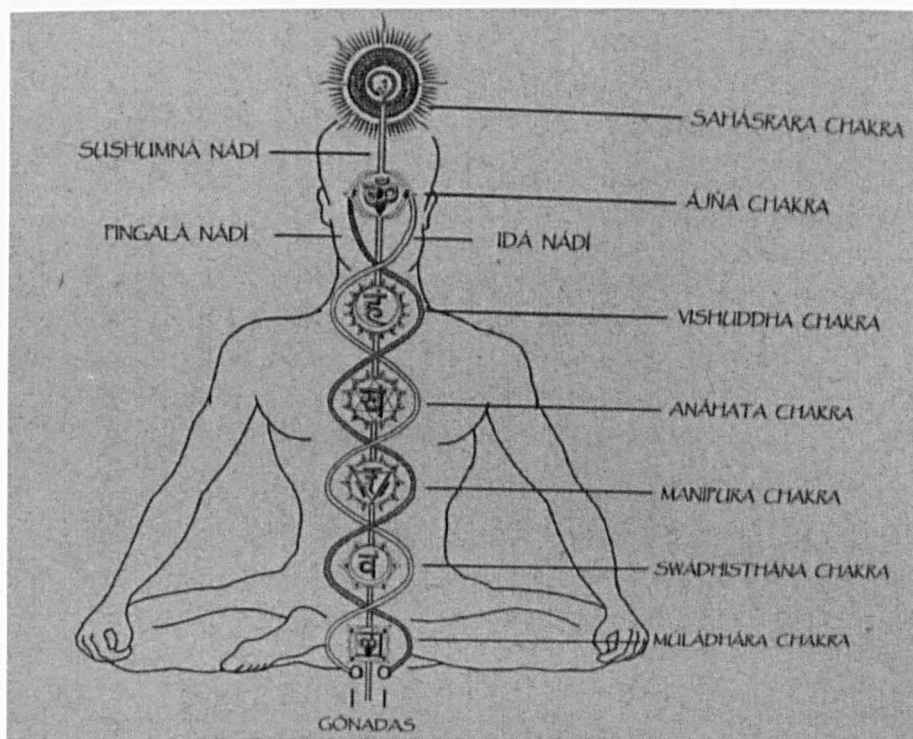


Fig. 20 – Main *nādis* and *chakras* (DeRose, 2007, p. 638).



Fig. 22 – *The House is the Body*: Series *Clothe-Body-Clothe*, 1967; *Abyss Mask*, 1968 (Clark, 1997, pp. 215, 218, 239)





Fig. 23 – *Man, living structure of a biological and cellular architecture*, 1969 (Clark, 1997, pp. 254, 255).



Fig. 24 – *Fantasmagorics of the Body: Tunnel*, 1973 (Clark, 1997, p. 294).



Fig. 25 and 26 – *The Body is the House: Elastic net*, 1974, *Cannibalism*, 1973 (Clark, 1997, pp. 302, 303).

## CHAPTER II

### HO | ME. HÉLIO OITICICA AND MIRCEA ELIADE.

#### TENDENCY TOWARD THE CONCRETE. RADICAL MYTHOLOGY AND INITIATORY PATTERN.<sup>1</sup>

- DREAMTIME
- ORIGIN MYTH AND CREATIVE POTENCY
- PARTITION OF THE CONSCIOUSNESS AND ATTAINMENT OF THE ATEMPORAL
- *PARANGOLÉ* AND THE 'WILL OF A NEW MYTH'
  1. RETURN TO THE UNCONDITIONED
  2. INITIATION AND ANTI-CULTURE
- 'GALACTIC DWELLINGS': CREATIVE EXERCISES FOR THE CHANGE OF THE MODE OF BEING
- THE DREAMER IN THE WORLD

In this chapter I present a reading of Hélio Oiticica's work according to three complementary notions that aim to substantiate his shift from painting to experimental practices. This took place through his research on the possibility of individual and collective creative availability and of creative accomplishment by both artist and spectator: the origin myth, the tendency towards the concrete, and the initiatory death.

The first notion, the origin myth, comprising the pattern of images whereby an 'exemplary action' prompts not merely every new creation but indeed 'a new

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<sup>1</sup> The text of this chapter, with minor differences, was published in Braga, Paula (2008) *Fios Soltos. A Arte de Hélio Oiticica*. Perspectiva: São Paulo.

order of creation', is considered here under Mircea Eliade's patterns of archaic images and also his recommendation to dissociate the 'idea of "myth" from "word" and "fable", connecting it with "sacred action", "significant gesture" and "primeval event"' (Eliade, 1971, p. 416). This provides us with an interpretation of Hélio Oiticica's paradigmatic set of works entitled *Bólides* (which are several types of containers for colour, whether solid or liquid colour pigments, or coloured materials of different kinds, such as earth) from 1963<sup>2</sup>, and their later reinvention with the *Contra-Bólides* (now involving an action, such as the spatial dislocation of the content) from 1979<sup>3</sup>. The *Bólide* experience is taken as an 'exemplary action' and presented as the culmination of Oiticica's previous research in painting, from 1954 to 1961, which was a response to the 'need to give colour a new structure' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 63). His exploration with colour led to a progressive inclusion of relief and eventually space in his paintings, from *Invenções* (*Inventions*) (fig. 8), *Monocromáticos* (*Monochromes*) (fig. 9), to *Relevos* (*Reliefs*) (fig. 10), *Bilaterais* (*Bilaterals*) (fig. 11), and finally (the) *Núcleos* (*Nuclei*) (fig. 12) and *Penetráveis* (*Penetrables*) (fig. 13), whereby the spectator physically enters the work and is surrounded by it, in an immersive experience of colour.

The second notion, the tendency towards the concrete as the paradigm assisting the experimental engagement of the body, is drawn from Eliade's reference to this tendency as the archaic preference for experimental knowledge, relying mostly on its physical and physiological aspects. Oiticica's research with

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<sup>2</sup> *Bólides* consisted of several types of vessels, such as round or square glass vases, or painted wooden boxes with thin drawers, containing colourful elements, whether solid or liquid colour pigments, or coloured materials of different kinds, such as earth, shells, sand, water, etc. Inserted within the artist's experience with colour and with the object, the components of the *Bólides* – materials and shapes – were arranged, in exhibitions, according to colour tonal relations.

<sup>3</sup> In *Contra-Bólide Devolver a terra à terra* (*Counter-Bolide Return earth to the earth*) Hélio Oiticica uses a square frame, fills it up with dark earth and then removes it, in order to leave a square of dark earth on the ground.

the *Parangolé*<sup>4</sup> (fig. 7), from 1964, is viewed according to this tendency. The *Parangolé* consisted initially in the assemblage of wearable garments that gained their full aesthetic coherence with the improvised movement of the participant's body, in what Haroldo de Campos described as a 'winged project' and as a 'hang glider to ecstasy', highlighting the quality of 'transfiguration of space-time' and 'the element body, element joy, almost erotic' associated with the use of the *Parangolés* (Oiticica, 1996, p. 218)<sup>5</sup>. It later became an experiment, named 'total *Parangolé*-living', from 1965 to 1966, that responded to Oiticica's interest in dance, an 'experience of the greatest vitality', and to his need for de-intellectualisation and free expression, improvisation, immersion in rhythm, as well as his search for a complete and vital identification with the gesture, and the obscuring of the intellect 'through an internal individual and collective mythical force' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 72)<sup>6</sup>. 'Total *Parangolé*-living' consisted of the 'search for environmental totalities' comprising the 'environmental participation' of the spectator, 'in orders that are established according to the growing creative need' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 67), alongside 'a true return to a mythical, primordial, structure of art' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 68), defining his participatory experience with the Mangueira slum and its Samba School.

The third notion, the enactment of the existential episode of 'initiatorial death' as the means to attain a reorganization of the sense experience, once again

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<sup>4</sup> The *Parangolé* is the assemblage of wearable garments that gain their full aesthetic coherence with the improvised movement of the body. The *Parangolés* can be simple and very light capes, made of different materials, whether fabric or plastic, presenting different colours, or otherwise more elaborate garments, bearing weight, the fabric sewed as a bag or a cushion, presenting different materials such as straw, glass, or rubber, and also bearing inscriptions. On several occasions, Hélio Oiticica invited his friends from the Mangueira to wear the *Parangolés*; in 1965, he was expelled from the opening of the exhibition *Opinião 65* at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro, at which he arrived with the dancers from the Mangueira Samba School dressed with *Parangolés*.

<sup>5</sup> Haroldo de Campos, *Asa delta para o êxtase* (*Hang glider to ecstasy*), interview with Lenora de Barros.

<sup>6</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> November 1965, *A dança na minha experiência* (*Dance on my experience*).



according to Mircea Eliade's understanding of the pattern of images of the 'centre of the world', provides an interpretation for Hélio Oiticica's environments, such as *Tropicália* (*Tropicalia*) (fig. 18) and *Éden* (*Eden*)<sup>7</sup>. These further extended, from 1967 onwards, his 'live proposition' of the *Parangolé* experience into the environment, into spaces that included different types of areas – tents, paths, beds, bordered areas arranged with different materials, such as earth or straw – prefiguring cabins, labyrinths, enclosures, that is, 'centres of the world', according to Mircea Eliade. From Oiticica's descriptions it is possible to establish, within that course that follows the 'clue for the creative state' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 102), a leap into what he understood as participation of the spectator, who would be induced into a dynamics of perception (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 104), introspection (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 104) and creative availability (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 102), through the 'direct contact' with these environments created to explore behaviour (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 100). Viewed as 'centres of the world', these environments reiterate the initiatory pattern of a 'new gestation followed by birth' revealing the 'nostalgia for paradise' (in Mircea Eliade's terms) or, in the words of Hélio Oiticica about *Tropicália*, 'the nostalgia of the primitive man', since they can be regarded as spaces for the annihilation of a current mode of being, for the return to an unconditioned state and for the search of a state of latency.

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<sup>7</sup> *Éden* was part of the *Whitechapel experiment*, that took place in London in 1969, at the Whitechapel Gallery, where Hélio Oiticica presented an environmental arrangement with exemplary pieces of his artistic research: pieces from his latest research in painting, such as *Bilaterais* (*Bilaterals*), *Núcleos* (*Nuclei*) and *Penetráveis* (*Penetrables*), some of the *Bólides* (*Bolides*) and *Parangolés* (*Parangolés*), as well as the penetrable, labyrinth *Tropicália* (*Tropicalia*). *Éden* consisted of the complementary arrangement of different areas and compartments, mostly bordered and enclosed, laid out with different materials, such as straw, earth, sand, or water, the *Áreas-Bólides* (*Bolide-Areas*), and several tents offering different sensorial experiences (such as *Aunt Ciata*, or *Cannabiana*), as well as the *Cama-Bólides* (*Bolide-bed*).

## DREAMTIME

The acknowledgement of a radical mythology of initiatory pattern on the work and creative process of Hélio Oiticica – a pattern announced on his statement ‘I aspire to the great labyrinth’ (*Aspiro ao grande labirinto*)<sup>8</sup> and evident on the *Penetráveis* (*Penetrables*)<sup>9</sup> (Fig. 1) – places his realizations on a tendency towards the concrete, as formulated by Mircea Eliade in his studies on the human experience of change in the mode of being, of passage from a profane mode of being to a non-profane mode of being.

Mircea Eliade describes the tendency toward the concrete as the preference for experimental knowledge, for practical, direct and individual realization, dependent on immediate, concrete data, hardly separable from their physiological substratum (Eliade, 1990, pp. 40-41, 144, 204)<sup>10</sup>, for that change or passage, and points the preponderance of this tendency on archaic or Pre-Classical cultural complexes, aboriginal, proto-historical and popular, non systematic and of oral tradition, in opposition to the tendency that values systematic, speculative

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<sup>8</sup> Sole entry in Hélio Oiticica's diary on the 15th January 1961, in Figueiredo, Luciano, Pape, Lygia & Salomão, Waly eds. (1986) *Aspiro ao Grande Labirinto, Seleção de Textos (1954-1969)* (*I Aspire to the Great Labyrinth, Selected Texts (1954-1969)*), Rio de Janeiro: Rocco.

<sup>9</sup> *The Penetrable*, a realization presented in the *Hunting Dogs Project*, in 1961 (a set of *Penetrables*), is preceded by the research that includes the experiments of ‘the transition of colour into space’ (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 50), *Invenções* (*Inventions*), *Monocromáticos* (*Monochromes*), *Bilaterais* (*Bilaterals*) and *Relevos Espaciais* (*Spatial Reliefs*) (1959), until the appearance of the *Núcleos* (*Nuclei*), that already attain, namely the medium nucleus, the functioning of the space ‘incorporated with sign’ (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 32), the precursor of the *Penetrables*.

<sup>10</sup> Eliade explains that the importance accorded to experience, in this tendency to the concrete ‘is based almost entirely on immediate, concrete data, still hardly separated from their physiological substratum’ (Eliade, 1990, p. 144) and that ‘the ambivalent function of experiences – which at once “enslave” man and stimulate him to “free” himself – is a concept peculiar to Indian thought. (...) we can already recognize in Yoga a tendency that is specifically its own (...) [according] the greatest importance to experience – that is, to knowledge of the different states of consciousness. (Eliade, 1990, pp. (...) and ‘[emphasizing] the necessity for direct experience, for realization, for practice (...) It is a tendency toward the concrete, toward the act, toward experimental verification (...) This tendency toward concrete, experimental knowledge, in view of finally mastering that of which one has, so to speak, taken possession through knowing it, will be carried to its extreme by tantrism’ (Eliade, 1990, pp. 40-41).

knowledge, characteristic of cultural complexes within the writing tradition, of scholastic and hermeneutics (Eliade, 1990, pp. 360-361)<sup>11</sup>.

Eliade (1990) develops a comparative approach to the human experience of the sacred that emphasizes the change of the mode of being and the dynamics of passage from the profane mode of being to a non-profane mode of being, through a contextual presentation of the cultural vehicles preferably adopted for that change or passage: methods (such as Yôga), techniques (such as shamanism), rites (such as the new year celebration or the orgy), myths (such as the origin myth, of the centre of the world or of the lost paradise) and symbols (such as the labyrinth or the egg).

Taking this perspective, this chapter explores the possibility that the whole of the work of Hélio Oiticica (realizations, creative process, reflections), emerging on the field of tension between these two epistemological paradigms – the tendency towards the concrete and the tendency towards speculation – consistently activates cultural vehicles of change of the mode of being that underlie a paradigm of tendency towards the concrete, and exposes the paradoxes of the coexistence of the two tendencies in the heterogeneous culture that his biography encompasses.

Hélio Oiticica's reference to Mircea Eliade occurs in 1973 (Lagnado, 2002)<sup>12</sup>, as an indication given by Guy Brett about the idea of 'dreamtime':

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<sup>11</sup> 'From the beginning, Yoga marked the reaction against metaphysical speculation and the excesses of fossilized ritualism; it represented a tendency toward the concrete, toward personal experience (...) We always find some form of Yoga whenever the goal is *experience of the sacred* or the attainment of a perfect *self-mastery* (...) In so far as Yoga represents a reaction against ritualism and scholastic speculation, it adheres to the aboriginal tradition and stands against the Indo-European religious heritage' (...) Yoga is not a technique of ecstasy; on the contrary, it attempts to realize absolute concentration in order to attain enstasis'.

<sup>12</sup> Lagnado, Lisette & Projecto HO eds. (2002). *Programa Hélio Oiticica, Itaú Cultural/Projecto Hélio Oiticica*, [internet] Notebook 2/73, p. 29 and pp. 97-99. Available from <http://itaucultural.org.br/aplicExternas/enciclopedia/ho/home/index.cfm>, [accessed 12 April 2007]. I am thankful to Paula Braga and Beatriz Scigliano Carneiro for this reference to Mircea Eliade in Hélio Oiticica's writings.

Guy discovered/uncovered a lot of things for me but above all he told me about the DREAMTIME as part of the social pattern of the ABORIGENES TRIBES: and he re-clarified/remembered it to me today: in ELIADE's book (which?) he discovered that there are intermittent periods in which the individual belonging to a tribe (TABA/NUCLEUS) leaves the community for an aimless wandering into the woods outside the TABA: release from communal obligations leads in this case to a release of thinking – a transformation occurring inside his social behaviour pattern: social-role-with-solidified-individuality: supreme form of non-repressive leisure: guy's discovery came brilliantly towards the main focus which generated many of my projects such as the Eden one etc.: BARRACÃO!: and to penetrate the consequences implied by such conception as DREAMTIME can be (and is) the most revealing and effective of the many lines of thought which lead to propositions such as those concerned with PARTICIPATION/BEHAVIOR/INVENTION/LEISURE (and CRELEISURE)/ETC. as recent experimental fields: Guy really revealed to me a bind of p a s s i o n within the conception of DREAMTIME. Whoever has had the privilege of DREAMTIMING can only be a man of wealth and taste – a full timer of experimentation and the one and only to install a defined behavioural pattern of full experimentation within established social ones".

Oiticica interprets *Dreamtime*, the 'time for dreaming' as a release from communal obligations and as a release from thinking and, in an advanced formulation, as a 'behavioural pattern' that defines itself as a counterpart to the established model: in fact, he characterizes a dynamics of consciousness by which a 'total experimentation' is accomplished. At the same time, he identifies the idea or conception of dreamtime as central in his experimental propositions, at that time the most recent ones, namely *Éden (Eden)* (Fig. 2) and *Barracão (Shanty House)*<sup>13</sup>, and distinguishes it as 'the most revealing and effective of the many lines of thought' leading to the latter.

The analysis presented in this chapter follows Hélio Oiticica's direction 'to penetrate the consequences implied by the conception of dreamtime'. To do so,

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<sup>13</sup> The *Barracão (Shanty House)* was never actually built, remaining as a project to gather artists and authors from different areas of creation in a common stimulating environment.

this analysis takes the artist's realizations and projects as vehicles for a change of the mode of being, through which he accomplishes the empirical, exploratory experimentation of the body and the observation of the dynamics of consciousness, in order to verify their integrity within a paradigm of tendency toward the concrete.

### ORIGIN MYTH AND CREATIVE POTENCY

On the archaic context, the validation of concrete experience<sup>14</sup> is equivalent to the validation of the elementary human actions and, primarily, actions concerned with physiology, directly linking to human genesis and existence, such as sexuality or nourishment. By charging them with significance, man sets himself free from merely automatic actions, thus protecting himself from meaninglessness and nothingness: he escapes from the profane sphere, unifying himself with reality (Eliade, 1971, pp. 31-32).

The archaic conception that man, through the elementary human actions, unites himself with reality, is a direct result of the cosmogonic mythology that brings cohesion to those cultural complexes. With a similar structure, and presenting variants in different communities, the origin myth is instructive: *in illo tempore*, before 'history' began, the gods or ancestors of man produced the archetypal actions, serving as model for all significant or relevant human actions of survival and subsistence, in all fields, from sexuality to hunting or navigation, and whenever the question was making something alive, animate, or inanimate

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<sup>14</sup> See note 10.

(Eliade, 1971, p. 411)<sup>15</sup>. The repetition of these actions allows man to become contemporary with the gods or the ancestors, enables him to abolish time – of profane actions, of transformation, and of human condition – and to return to a time before ‘history’, to the original moment, of unification with reality, to a pre-cosmogonic, pre-formal state.

The repetition of the original action – the exemplary action – is one of the mythical factors that define Hélio Oiticica’s creative motivation. Oiticica designates the repetition of the exemplary action as ‘program-work in progress’ and, on the *Contra-Bólido Devolver a terra à terra* (*Counter-Bolide Return earth to the earth*) (Fig. 3), he makes use of a ‘poetic operation’ of dislocation of earth to enact it<sup>16</sup>:

This consists of a type of poetic operation that is established in what I call COUNTER-BOLIDE – that is: it is the poetic counter operation of that which created the BÓLIDE [BOLIDE] [...] The GLASS BOLIDE (Fig. 4) (and the BOX BOLIDE (Fig. 5) too: the pigment colour applied or boxed-in in a block was a way of turning effective the pigment mass in a new form extra-painting) which contained pigment, earth, etc., did not act as a mere “container for the earth” but made manifest the presence of some earth as a piece of the earth: it gave it a first and contained concretion removing it from a naturalistic dispersed stage [...] in this COUNTER-BOLIDE operation I use a timber enclosure 80cm x 80cm x 10cm and I fill it with black earth brought from another site: but instead of placing this earth in a container it is dumped inside this bottomless enclosure: its bottom is the ground itself where the timber fence has been placed: it is then taken off leaving EARTH OVER EARTH; the COUNTER-BOLIDE is then a kind of work-program in progress: that can be repeated when the proper occasion or necessity for it appears: the COUNTER-BOLIDE would then reveal at each repetition of this work-program in progress the characteristics of a work-genesis concretion which was a main element in the discovery-invention of the BOLIDE in 1963: that is another reason why I

<sup>15</sup> Eliade recommends the dissociation of the ‘idea of “myth” from “word” and “fable” (cf. Homeric use of *mythos*: “word”, “discourse”) and connecting it with “sacred action”, “significant gesture” and “primeval event” (Eliade, 1971, p. 416).

<sup>16</sup> In *Contra-Bólido Devolver a terra à terra* (*Counter-Bolide Return earth to the earth*) Hélio Oiticica uses a square frame, fills it up with dark earth and then removes it, in order to leave a square of dark earth on the ground.

discovered the BOLIDE to be a new order of work and not a mere object or sculpture! (OITICICA, 1993, p. 202)<sup>17</sup>

The establishment or foundation of an original action bestows the act and creative process with their antecedent of potentiality and latency; thus, an original action is more than 'a creation', since it enunciates as well its own creative potency, 'the creation'. On one side, because it is exemplary, the original action 'may be repeated whenever there is the occasion-need for it'. Each repetition – in this case, under the form of *Contra-Bólido* (*Counter-Bolide*), which Oiticica designates as 'program-work in progress' – brings into the present, actualizes, the exemplary action, that Oiticica designates 'work-genesis', in this case the *Bólido* (*Bolide*) of 1963 (Fig. 6). On the other side, the genesis work is the rendering of an 'invention-discovery', seemingly an archetypal action<sup>18</sup>: it expresses, at the same time, a creative command and its underlying creative potency, that is, it brings about the possibility of radical invention, through which, besides the mere work of art, the artist institutes a new order of work of art (Oiticica, 1993, p. 223)<sup>19</sup>.

Oiticica seems to search for the condition of contemporaneity with the gods or the ancestors, trying the existential situation of the original moment (Eliade, 1955, p. 395)<sup>20</sup>. His appropriation of the mythical structure of the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ho rio ataulfo*, 1 Jan. 1980, *Account sobre devolver a terra à terra meu em kleemania* a 18 de dez. 1979 no Caju.

<sup>18</sup> See note 15.

<sup>19</sup> The possibility of radical invention is proven by the diversity of Hélio Oiticica's work, that remarkably covers the range of present tendencies in art, as Guy Brett (2004) enumerates: 'It is remarkable to what extent the work of Oiticica touches upon almost all the areas of recent art, whether they are conceived as a set of passive categories – kinetic art, process art, the monochrome, minimal art, conceptual art, pop art, political art, land art, environmental art, body art, participation, performance – or as burning and contested issues: the status of the object as communication or consumer commodity; notions of authorship and the relation of artist to audience; the gap between fine art and popular culture; questions of identity, sexuality, decolonization and cultural difference; the relationship between art and life' (Brett, 2004, p. 51).

<sup>20</sup> '(...) the "mythical period" must not be thought of simply as past time, but as a present and a future, and as a state as well as a period. That period is 'creative', in the sense that it was then, in *illo tempore*, that the creation took place, as well as the revelation of the archetypal activities by

original action reveals a will to return to the pre-formal, to the latent and potential state that precedes and commands creation, in two concurrent processes: the access and enacting of the creative potency and the confirmation of the indeterminate character of creation. The statement on the *Contra-Bólide* – one of the last realizations of Hélio Oiticica, in 1979 – assumes the importance of a retrospective reflection about his position as a creator, asserting the coherence of his creative process, since it establishes explicitly the link with *Bólide* and revalidates the intention that motivated that generative creation and its becoming.

*Bólide* and *Contra-Bólide* are foremost symbolic experiences: on the experience *Bólide*, the object is transformed ‘in a symbolic way, into work of art’ (Lagnado, 2002)<sup>21</sup>, rendering concrete the presence of earth by actually containing it; on *Contra-Bólide*, the object turns from container to mould, and the symbolic transformation evolves to a ‘poetic operation’, in this case of returning earth to earth. Through this ‘poetic operation’, that allows and foresees the repetition of the action, the experience gains the dimension of rite, a dimension in which the repetition of the action, as we saw, is neither automatic nor meaningless, but restores an original action, rebinding a complex of meanings concerned with the enacting of the creative potency, and displaying a structure of origin myth.

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gods, ancestors or culture heroes. In *illo tempore*, in the mythical period, anything was possible. The species were not yet fixed and all forms are “fluid”.

<sup>21</sup> Programa HO, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1963: ‘For instances, an empty box, with the shape of “some solids” is transformed, by the spatial value of colour, in a symbolic form, that is, in a work of art, which is to say that its shape was rediscovered as if it was the “first empty box-form”’.



## PARTITION OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND ATTAINMENT OF THE ATEMPORAL

The experience *Bólide*, let us recall, is 'the beginning of the perception of the specific qualities of the objects, (...) it is the stripping of these existing objects, useful or not, of its connotative qualities, in order to leave them to their primitive purity'<sup>22</sup>. *Bólide* aims at raising an 'oscillation of the point of interest' and a 'continual structural displacement', which 'creates the under-privileging of the total vision of the work', that 'is not seen "this" or "that way", but totally, following the spectator's intuition in the displacement he is led to throughout the structure'<sup>23</sup>. The experience *Bólide* seems to suggest a regression on the cognitive processing which Oiticica explains in even simpler terms: 'In the experience *Bólide* I feel like a child who begins to experiment the objects to learn its qualities: solid, hollow, the "round", its weight, transparency'<sup>24</sup>. *Bólide* is situated in the group of experiments concerning the object, which includes *Parangolé* (*Parangole*) (fig. 7), and in which Oiticica reaffirms the importance of experimental knowledge – of practical realization, direct and individual – of a dynamics of consciousness set out by the features of the object. This realization does not depend on a 'objective apprehension' of the materials, but on a 'conditioned-unconditioned' relationship (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 66)<sup>25</sup> in the contact between the spectator and the work, which emphasizes on the object whatever within it 'remains opened to imagination'.

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<sup>22</sup> Programa HO, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1963.

<sup>23</sup> Programa HO, 8<sup>th</sup> June 1964.

<sup>24</sup> Programa HO, 19<sup>th</sup> September 1963.

<sup>25</sup> November 1964, *Bases fundamentais para uma definição do Parangolé* (*Fundamental bases for a definition of Parangolé*): 'What emerges in the continuous spectator-work contact will therefore be conditioned by the character of the work, in itself unconditioned. Hence, there is a conditioned-unconditioned relationship in the continuous apprehension of the work'.

The experience *Bólides*, let us recall still, is preceded by the research that Oiticica pursues in response to the 'need to give a new structure to colour' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 63)<sup>26</sup>, which resulted in the *Invenções (Inventions)* (fig. 8), *Monocromáticos (Monochromes)* (fig. 9), *Relevos (Reliefs)* (fig. 10), *Bilaterais (Bilaterals)* (fig. 11), *Núcleos (Nuclei)* (fig. 12) and the *Penetráveis (Penetrables)*, experiences that search for a 'new order of colour' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 50)<sup>27</sup>. In all of the latter, Hélio underlines the importance of the dialogue between artist and matter (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 30)<sup>28</sup>, 'that demands from the artist an availability and a disinterest, almost a playfulness with colour' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 30)<sup>29</sup>. The dialogue with matter provides the 'creative movement' from which an indeterminate, unformulated content is born<sup>30</sup>, in what Guy Brett (Brett, 1969) referred as the 'miraculous, precious existence' of material and colour<sup>31</sup>. On the creative experience according to Hélio Oiticica, such creative movement implies the partition of consciousness in two instances – mind and creative movement:

Creation is the unlimited; there is no way to approach it with your mind. The mind has the power to arrest what must be spontaneous, what has to be born. That way, however, it only manages to wither the creative movement. The mind is needed, but we shouldn't let ourselves fall into bondage; it is necessary to set the unlimited in

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<sup>26</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> October 1963, *Bólides*.

<sup>27</sup> 1962, *A transição da cor do quadro para o espaço e o sentido de construtividade (The transition of colour from the frame into space)*.

<sup>28</sup> 21<sup>st</sup> April 1961, 'Today it is to me clearer than ever that it is not the exterior appearance that brings about the feature of work of art but its meaning, that comes from the dialogue between the artist and the matter with which he expresses himself'.

<sup>29</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> March 1961, 'That order escapes the purely rational and, strange though it may seem, demands from the artist availability and disinterest, almost a playfulness with colour. From that playfulness and making a new order emerges, unknown, that not even the artist is aware a priori. Colour is a religious need, as if who prayed were on a dialogue here with colour and becoming himself structured'.

<sup>30</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> September 1960, 'On the dialogue between the artist and matter, resides his creative movement, and it is from that that one may say that a content is born; undetermined, unformulated content. That process is not 'transformation', since transformation implies transforming something into a thing, transforming something plastically; yet that 'something' does not exist previously, being born simultaneously on the creative movement, with the work'.

<sup>31</sup> *The Whitechapel Experience*.

motion, which is nascent, always novel; being made (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 22)<sup>32</sup>.

With the *Núcleos* (fig. 13) and the *Penetráveis*, in which the spectator physically enters the work and is surrounded by it, Oiticica aims at making 'clearer the intention of all that experience in the sense of transforming what is immediate in quotidian living in non-immediate' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 53)<sup>33</sup>, suggesting the attainment of the atemporal, the likelihood of a passage from a profane mode of being to a non-profane mode of being. In fact, on the process of the 'nuclear development of colour', the latter is taken as a structure that progresses in time and in space, thus acquiring an 'existential, phenomenological character' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 28)<sup>34</sup>: it pulsates from 'the static state into duration' and achieves an 'infinite dimension' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 40)<sup>35</sup>. Within that dimension, are established, on one side, the accomplishment of an 'interior movement' of 'indeterminate aspirations' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 41), the creative movement<sup>36</sup>, and, on the other side, the 'dialogue with the spectator, an existential accomplishment in the highest sense of the term' (Figueiredo, 1986, p.

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<sup>32</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> September 1960.

<sup>33</sup> 'For me, the invention of the *Penetrável*, besides generating the invention of the projects, opens the way to a totally unexplored region in the art of colour, bringing in there a collectivist and cosmic character and making clearer the intention of all that experience in the sense of transforming what is immediate on the quotidian living in non-immediate'.

<sup>34</sup> 16<sup>th</sup> February 1961, 'The position of the artist, genetic position, phenomenologically, will only be possible with an expression that is accomplished in space and in time'.

<sup>35</sup> *Cor tonal e desenvolvimento nuclear da cor* (*Tonal colour and the nuclear development of colour*), 17<sup>th</sup> of March of 1962, '(...) as it developed into space, colour began taking the shape of a development that I call nuclear, as if colour pulsated from its static state into duration, as if it pulsated from within its nucleus and developed itself. Hence it is not properly the problem of tonal colour but, due to its intermediation character (...) on the search for that infinite dimension of colour, in relation with structure, space and time'.

<sup>36</sup> It is possible to interpret the term 'aspiration', frequent in Hélio Oiticica's reflections concerning the 'painting in the space' (1959-64), as 'potential creation', 'latent creation' and, simultaneously, 'something ineffable', clarifying in that sense the dynamics underlying the 'creative movement'. On the reflection about the experience of the NÚCLEOS, the term is used, symptomatically, in relation to the 'improvisation nucleus': 'On the improvisation, here, the contact with the elements (colour, space, time, structure) is more direct, more immediate; it is an aspiration that suddenly is accomplished, it emerges, impregnated at the same time of old and present significances; in a certain sense it consists of a sudden synthesis of aspirations that would be lost if postponed', 27<sup>th</sup> of December of 1961 (Figueiredo, 1986, 86).

36). This existential experience is lived as a climax, the overcoming of the quotidian (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 30)<sup>37</sup>, that Oiticica had previously described as 'finding eternity in temporality [that, by being] lived and apprehended becomes static in a non-time (the other pole would be the relative temporality of the quotidian)' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 20)<sup>38</sup>.

## PARANGOLÉ AND THE "WILL OF A NEW MYTH"

### 1. RETURN TO THE UNCONDITIONED

On the experimental progression 'more and more engaged with individual behaviour and participation' and aiming at the 'overthrow of all conditioning', which would later lead to the 'living proposition' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 102)<sup>39</sup> of *Éden* (fig. 14), *Barracão* and *Ninhos* (*Nests*)<sup>40</sup> (fig. 15), while the experience *Bólido* is determinant for the distinction between simple object and a new order of work of art<sup>41</sup>, the experience *Parangolé* establishes, besides that, 'a true return to a mythical, primordial, structure of art' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 68)<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> March 1961.

<sup>38</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> September 1960.

<sup>39</sup> *O aparecimento do supra-sensorial na arte brasileira* (*The emergence of the supra-sensorial on the Brazilian art*). The term 'vivencial', used in the original text ('proposição vivencial') derives from the word 'vivência', which is translated as 'existence' or 'experience gained through existence'; the latter is the sense in which I use here the term 'living'.

<sup>40</sup> The *Ninhos* (*Nests*) were already rehearsed in *Éden* at the Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1969, naming one of the tents that Oiticica then presented. This idea of creative gestation, was further developed during his residence at the University of Sussex, also in 1969, as an architectural wooden structure containing several juxtaposed compartments, with space enough for one person to sit and lie down. He followed the same idea and structure to shape the *Babylonists*, installed at his New York place, from 1971 to 1974 and, previously, at the exhibition *Information* at the MoMA in 1970.

<sup>41</sup> In the case, designated as 'trans-object': 'Previously, and still in a flow of realizations, all objective structure is already created by me, and thus the identification exists already at the moment when the structures are born, issuing the dialogue subject-object in a more serene fusion. On the "trans-objects" the dialogue is issued by the opposition subject-object (...) on the "trans-objects" there is the sudden identification of that subjective conception with the pre-existing object as necessary to the structure of the work, which, in its condition of object,

As a new work of art, due to its constructive sense<sup>43</sup>, *Parangolé* opens to the 'search for environmental totalities' and to the 'environmental participation' of the spectator, 'in orders that are established according to the growing creative need' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 67)<sup>44</sup>, arriving at the 'total *Parangolé*-living'<sup>45</sup> in which the spectator is now 'participator' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 37). The designation *Parangolé* (fig. 7), with a previously unknown meaning and appropriated from an inscription that identified an assemblage made by a homeless man (Carneiro, 2004, p. 235)<sup>46</sup>, retrieves a term from a non-institutional culture. The designation *Parangolé* is exceptional among the designations given by Hélio to his experiences and realizations, which recover terms from a heterodox yet institutional culture, in a directly intelligible way, and referring, for instances, to the history of art (*Ready-Constructible*) or to pop trends (*Cosmococa*). The designation 'Parangolé' does not merely assign the interest in the 'popular constructive primitiveness' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 66)<sup>47</sup>, but denotes the intent to distinguish a dynamics that underlies the 'totality' (or 'objective foundation') of those 'primary constructive nuclei' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 66) – 'the pluridimensional relation between "perception" and "imagination"'<sup>48</sup>.

This relation is equalled to a process of regression to the pre-linguistic

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opposed to the subject, is no longer such at the moment of identification, because in truth it existed implicitly on the idea', 29<sup>th</sup> of October of 1963, *Bólides (Bolides)* (Figueiredo, 1986, pp. 64-5).

<sup>42</sup> *Bases fundamentais para uma definição do Parangolé (Fundamental bases for a definition of the Parangolé)*.

<sup>43</sup> This 'constructive sense' discloses 'a constructive nucleus of spatial definite sense, a totality', that 'tries the objective foundation and neither the dynamism nor the disassembling of the object' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 66) and that enables the 'establishment of "perceptual-structural relations"', 'imaginative-structural', ultra-elastic on their possibilities and on the entailing pluridimensional relation between 'perception' and productive 'imagination' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 68).

<sup>44</sup> 'In orders that range from the infinitely small to the urban space and that are not established a priori'.

<sup>45</sup> *Anotações sobre o Parangolé (Notes on the Parangolé)* (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 72).

<sup>46</sup> Hélio Oiticica interviewed by Jorge Guinle Filho, A última entrevista de Hélio Oiticica (The last interview of Hélio Oiticica), in: *Interview*, April 1980.

<sup>47</sup> *Bases fundamentais para uma definição do Parangolé (Fundamental bases for a definition of the Parangolé)*.

<sup>48</sup> See note 41.

consciousness, of suspension of the discursive devices (analytic, rational) and of retrieval of the situation of spontaneity that entails, symptomatically, the creation of a new verbal language, unintelligible to others. In this sense, the designation *Parangolé* suggests the symbolic adoption of an unacknowledged culture and announces the mythical factor of return to the unconditioned that corroborates, as we shall see, the conception of dreamtime and all the creative enterprise of the 'living proposition' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 103)<sup>49</sup>.

On the *Parangolé* experiment, Oiticica carries out the approximation to a set of factors that he admits bringing about the 'recovery of the myth', such as 'elements of dance' or 'the creation of privileged places'. Oiticica describes the influence of these factors as a 'continual and wide range interference [on the behaviour of the spectator]', which may emerge on the fields of psychology, anthropology, sociology and history' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 69)<sup>50</sup>. Mircea Eliade synthesizes the essential aspects of the mythical behaviour – the exemplary pattern, the repetition, the break with profane duration and integration into primordial (original) time (Eliade, 1977, p. 31)<sup>51</sup> – and points out that the myth reveals a region of ontology that is inaccessible to logical experience (Eliade, 1971, p. 418), hence

one of the main functions of myth is to determine, to authenticate the levels of reality which both a first impression and further thought indicate to be manifold and heterogeneous' (Eliade, 1971, p. 428),

this way transforming an event into a mode of being (Eliade, 1971, p. 425).

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<sup>49</sup> *O aparecimento do supra-sensorial na arte brasileira (The emergence of the supra-sensorial on the Brazilian art).*

<sup>50</sup> *Bases fundamentais para uma definição do Parangolé (Fundamental bases for a definition of the Parangolé).*

<sup>51</sup> 'It seems unlikely that any society could completely dispense with myths, for, of what is essential in mythical behaviour – the exemplary pattern, the repetition, the break with profane duration and integration into primordial time – the first two at least are consubstantial with every human condition'.

## 2. INITIATION AND ANTI-CULTURE

With his interest in dance, 'experience of the greatest vitality', the issue of the partition of consciousness becomes more precise in the discourse of Oiticica, when he parallels his vital need of de-intellectualism and his need for a free expression, and when he refers the correspondence between, on one side, improvisation, immersion in rhythm, the complete and vital identification of gesture and, on the other side, the obscuring of the intellect 'by an internal individual and collective mythical force' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 72)<sup>52</sup>.

Symptomatically, the experience *Parangolé* (fig. 16) presents, when under the form of an individual vestment, the opportunity to experience a new corporeal sensitization and motorization, of suspension of motor-perceptual automatisms and of surmounting of cognitive atavisms. This experience facilitates the access to an 'embodied core consciousness' (Damásio, 1999)<sup>53</sup>, directly dependent on the homeostatic, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive systems<sup>54</sup> and on the inputs of the

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<sup>52</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> November 1965, *A dança na minha experiência* (*Dance on my experience*).

<sup>53</sup> In his book *The Feeling of What Happens* (1999), when defining consciousness, the behavioural neurologist and neuroscientist Antonio Damásio states that, if actions are at the root of survival and if their power is tied to the availability of guiding images, then it follows that a device capable of maximizing the effective manipulation of images in the service of the interests of a particular organism would have given enormous advantages to the organisms that possessed the device and would probably have prevailed in evolution, consciousness being such a device. Damásio's research could be synthesized in the conclusion 'no body, no consciousness', since our bodies and emotions seem to be constitutive of our very way of 'knowing' and 'feeling' the world, a perspective on consciousness that explains our conscious experience of the external object and the interior self as an abstraction from bodily-experience and bodily-based emotion. Damásio's scheme delineates at least two types of consciousness: the 'core consciousness', a simple biological form of consciousness not unique to humans, which provides creatures with a sense of self in the immediate moment, and is related with the homeostatic, kinaesthetic and proprioceptive systems; and the 'extended consciousness', a more complex form of consciousness, which has many grades and levels to it, including the capacity for narrative, an awareness of the past and future, and an ability to master language.

<sup>54</sup> The homeostatic systems are responsible for the regulation of temperature in the body. The hypothalamic thermal control in mammals is reflexly activated by thermoreceptors of skin and mucous membranes, and by temperature change in the hypothalamus itself, or the blood circulating through it. The kinaesthetic systems are responsible for balance and coordination of movements. Kinesthetic information comes from receptors in joints, ligaments and muscle fibres. It calculates the rate and direction of movement, and hence conveying the message to the corresponding brain area. It helps us to understand the movement, position as well as direction

sensory modalities that interlink the body/mind/environment instances. The situation thus achieved opposes the supremacy of the knowledge processed by a 'high-order consciousness' (Edelman, 2004)<sup>55</sup>, featured by the mediation of language and by the loss of vivacity in the percept's sensory component (Varela, 2001). When Haroldo de Campos addresses the *Parangolé*, firstly as a 'winged project' and, afterwards, as a 'hang glider to ecstasy', explaining that he wished to highlight, at the same time, the quality of 'transfiguration of space-time' and 'the element body, element joy, almost erotic' that emerges from the use of *Parangolé*, he underlines, in fact, the *sine-qua-non* condition of the experience – its practical, live realization:

(...) those capes, suddenly, with the wearer, the wearer's body, become splendid and take off as if in transfiguring flight, invested with life by the very presence of the wearer and the spectator. In this case, he should not be called a spectator, but rather the 'enjoyer', because he is inside, he is a catalyst. The spectator is the one who sees the wearer's performance, as a sort of 'tactilizer' or sensitizer of the cape, which is capable of such plasticity and which suddenly takes flight at the moment when, as if by magic, the law of gravity is suspended by the wearer's simple gesture with which the *Parangolé* is invested (Oiticica, 1996, p. 218)<sup>56</sup>.

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of physical body by using our sense organs. The proprioceptive sense is believed to be composed of information from sensory neurons located in the inner ear (motion and orientation) and in the stretch receptors located in the muscles and the joint-supporting ligaments (stance), thus indicating whether the body is moving with required effort, as well as where the various parts of the body are located in relation to each other.

<sup>55</sup> The biologist and Nobel Prize in Physiology Gerald Edelman, whose later work is devoted to neurosciences and philosophy of the mind, also makes a distinction between what he calls 'primary consciousness' (Edelman, 2004), which is the ability to create, right now, a scene or all the complex discriminations in what he calls 'the remembered present', and higher order consciousness, which allows for concepts of the past and the future, and the development of a social self through language, thus allowing us to be conscious of being conscious. 'Primary Consciousness is the brain stem, together with the limbic (hedonic) system, the system concerned with appetite, sexual and consummatory behavior, and evolved defensive behavior patterns. It is a value system; it is extensively connected to many different body organs, the endocrine system, and the autonomic nervous system. Together, these systems regulate heart and respiratory rate, sweating, digestive functions, and the like, as well as bodily cycles related to sleep and sex' (Edelman, 1992, p. 117).

<sup>56</sup> Haroldo de Campos, *Asa delta para o êxtase (Hang glider to ecstasy)*, interview with Lenora de Barros.



Haroldo de Campos also refers, in connection to Hélios's personality, 'the moment "intellect"/moment "body" polarization', relating the 'body pole' to the 'direct inflow of living, of existence (...) of the sensory, of the epiphanic', and, thus, to the assimilation of a direct knowledge in which the body is the preferential medium for 'deconstruction phenomena, destruction of patterns, of schemes'. Besides, Haroldo de Campos homologizes the *Parangolé* to the Hagoromo mantle of feathers, central iconographic element on a legendary story of the Japanese classical theatre Nô, bringing forth the 'mythic-poetic dimension' (Oiticica, 1996, p. 218) of the former. In effect, Eliade shows that the complex of plastic representations with the sense of flight points out to the idea of ecstatic or magical flight, and integrates a universally diffused symbolism of ascension which expresses two purposes,

transcendence and freedom, both the one and the other obtained by a rupture of the plane of experience, and expressive of an ontological mutation of the human being' (Eliade, 1977, p. 108)<sup>57</sup>,

primarily conveyed by the abolition of weight (Eliade, 1977, p. 104). Particularly within the rites related with the ecstatic or magical flight, the ability to fly proclaims the degeneration of humanity (Eliade, 1989, p. 480), since, according to a lot of traditions and myths, in the mythical epoch, in the primordial time, every man had that ability (Eliade, 1989, p. 478). Assimilation of flight to the fall in human condition is also confirmed by the role that nostalgia for flight has on the moving imagination of human psyche<sup>58</sup>:

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<sup>57</sup> 'despite the many and various revalorisations that the symbols of flight and of ascension have undergone in the course of history, their structural solidarity remains still discernible. In other terms, whatever be the content and the value ascribed to ascensional experience by the many religions in which flight and ascension play their parts, there remain always the two essential motifs we have emphasized – transcendence and freedom, both the one and the other obtained by a rupture of the plane of experience, and expressive of an ontological mutation of the human being'.

<sup>58</sup> Concerning the 'imagination of movement', Eliade refers the book *L'air et les Songes*, by Gaston Bachelard (Eliade, 1989, p. 480).

upon the different but interconnected planes of the oneiric, of active imagination, of mythological creation and folk-lore, of ritual and of metaphysical speculation, and, finally, upon the plane of ecstatic experience, the symbolism of ascension always refers to a breaking-out from a situation that has become 'locked' or 'petrified', a rupture of the plane which makes it possible to pass from one mode of being into another – in short, liberty 'of movement', freedom to change the situation, to abolish a conditioning system (Eliade, 1977, pp. 118-119).

Furthermore, the quality of integration in myth is also conveyed in the *Parangolé* experiment by the mythical structure of the conjunction of opposites, expressed in the polarity that opposes the static and the dynamic, in which Oiticica finds the key to what he calls 'environmental art': 'the eternally mobile, transformable, which is structured by the act of the spectator and the static, which is also in its own way transformable, depending on the environment in which it is participating as structure' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 76)<sup>59</sup>. Eliade explains how the *coincidentia oppositorum*, in which all the contraries are reconciled, constitutes one of the most primordial ways of expressing the paradox of divine reality, of the non-profane mode of being, an archetypal model, transversal throughout the variety of cultural complexes. It is the mythical structure underlying rites such as the orgy – an event that symbolizes the return to the indistinct, to a state in which all attributes disappear and contraries merge – as well as contemplative techniques that similarly aim at surpassing all attributes. In the latter, the *coincidentia oppositorum* consists of a process that begins with the identification of all of the individual's experience with the rhythms that conduct the universe until the individual takes into himself the cosmos as a whole, in 'a unity which signifies not the chaos that existed before any forms were created but the undifferentiated being in which all forms are merged' (Eliade, 1971, pp.

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<sup>59</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Abril 1966, *A dança na minha experiência (continuação)* (*Dance on my experience (continuation)*).

419-420). In Oiticica's experience, a similar process seems to take place with his research concerning colour, carried on with the research concerning the object, and explicitly set forth on the 'total *Parangolé*-living' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 72)<sup>60</sup>. Oiticica starts by referring that 'it is necessary that the colour lives, itself; only that way will it have a unique moment, carrying in itself its own time, and the inner time, the volition of inner structure' (Figueiredo, 1986, pp. 18-19)<sup>61</sup>; he later explains the 'nuclear development of colour' as if the latter 'pulsated from its static state into duration', in a search for the 'infinite dimension of colour', nevertheless acknowledging on that plastic issue a 'purely transcendental sense of itself' (Figueiredo, 1986, pp. 40-41)<sup>62</sup>, as we previously noted. It is also this process of identification that will preside to the 'trans-objective relation' inherent to the *Bólides*, in which what matters for the perception of the work is the total phenomenon, 'directly and not by parts', enabling the 'foundation of the object', 'in its pure spatial shaping, in its own time' (Figueiredo, 1986, pp. 40-41). Resembling the search for the structure of colour that has preceded it, the search for the structure of the object is additionally clarified, in connection with *Parangolé*, as a quest for the 'constitutive elements of that structure, for the basic structures of the constitution of the world of the objects and for the roots of the objective genesis of the work' (Figueiredo, 1986, pp. 40-41), a quest supported by the examples of 'popular constructive primitivism' and its 'primary constructive nuclei with a defined spatial sense, a totality' (Figueiredo, 1986, pp. 66-67). Still concerning the '*Parangolé*'s structure' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 76)<sup>63</sup>, the contribution of the practice of the samba, enlightening for Oiticica about the 'creation through the corporeal act' and the 'continuous transformability', is also

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<sup>60</sup> *Anotações sobre o Parangolé (Notes on the Parangolé)*.

<sup>61</sup> May 1960.

<sup>62</sup> *Cor tonal e desenvolvimento nuclear da cor (Tonal colour and nuclear development of colour)*.

<sup>63</sup> 10<sup>th</sup> Abril 1966, *A dança na minha experiência (continuação) (Dance on my experience (continuation))*.

revealing, by opposition, of what he calls the ‘non-transformability’, the “being” of the things, that is, the static expression of the objects, its expressive immanence’, that the artist explains as

not exactly “not transforming in space and in time”, but the immanence that reveals its structure, founding on the world, on the objective space it occupies, its unique place’ (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 75).

Therefore, *Parangolé* conciliates the two attributes, ‘non-transformability’ or ‘static expression of the objects’ and ‘transformability’ or ‘expressive lucidity of the immanence of the act’, representing a conjunction of opposites by which is it possible to interpret the integrative sense of the designation ‘total expression of the self:

it would be the total “lack of social place”, and at the same time the discovery of my “individual place” as a complete man in the world, as “social being” in its total sense and not included in a determined stratum or “elite” (...) the will for a whole position, social in its most noble sense, free and total. What interests me is the “total act of being” that I experience here in me – not partially total acts, but a “total act of life”, irreversible, the unbalance for the balance of the being (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 74)<sup>64</sup>.

The ‘discovery of immanence’ (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 73) thus happens as an initiatory event, it seems to assume that dimension: it arises from a live experience that brings a direct knowledge about the change of the mode of being, described by Oiticica respectively in terms of belonging to a universe, and of ontological totality. Eliade explains how, on an archaic context, initiation is a fundamental existential experience of passage from the natural mode to the cultural mode by which man becomes apt to assume a whole mode of being, knowing, consequent (Eliade, 1995, p. 3). Initiation consists on the acquisition of the knowledge that marks the end of the ‘natural’ man, non cultural, and the

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<sup>64</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> November of 1965, *A dança na minha experiência* (*Dance on my experience*).

transition to a new modality of existence, in which he lives not only in an immediate reality (Eliade, 1995, p. xiii) but, presented to the transhuman values<sup>65</sup>, is prepared to participate in the culture he makes henceforth part of. This passage is symbolically consummated by the 'initiator death', a temporary return to chaos, that confirms the end of a mode of being (Eliade, 1995, p. xiii), or by an alternative pattern, namely that in which the idea of death is substituted by the idea of a new gestation followed by birth, meaning a return to the situation of latency and spontaneity that confirms the transition to a new mode of being (Eliade, 1995, pp. 130-131). 'Initiator death' is a recommencement, never an end, for there is not one rite or myth in which initiator death is something final, but always the sine-qua-non condition of a transition into another mode of being, an ordeal indispensable for regeneration (Eliade, 1977, p. 227). Besides, initiation is a collective event, it involves a community which, through the re-actualization of that live experience, also benefits of a regeneration (Eliade, 1977, p. 18). The impact on Oiticica of his participation on the social and cultural reality of Mangueira can be assessed, primarily, by his assimilation of the most characteristic trace of the initiator pattern – the perception that a change of the mode of being can only be operated by the annihilation of the current mode of being (Eliade, 1995, p. 132), a feature underlying his commentary about the 'formulation of the idea of *Parangolé* in 1964', on the item *Barracão* of *Creleazer* (*Creleisure*) (fig. 17):

*Brazilian* "root root" or the foundation of the "root Brazil", in opposition to the folklorisation of this 'root material' (...) *Parangolé* rebels, since '64, against this oppressive folklorisation, and uses the same material which would formerly be folk-Brazil, as 'non-oppressive structure', as a revelation of a "my-root" reality. Jerônimo, in the pictures wearing the cape (Aterro, 1967) reveals an entire

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<sup>65</sup> Variably, the techniques, institutions and patterns of behaviour of the community, the traditions and myths of the origin of the cosmos and of man, the names of the gods and their attributes, among others.

synthesis (...) it is a root-structure and it is non-oppressive, because it reveals the live potentiality of a “culture in formation”: I regard culture in formation as the open possibility of a culture, in opposition to the character with which something cultural is usually designated. In a sense – very much so – it is anti-culture, because it proposes the demolition of what is oppressive; culture, since it is artificially imposed, is always oppressive; it is the non-creation which comes with the glorification of what is already finalized (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 116)<sup>66</sup>.

Brought up in a family of anarchist tradition, his experience in Mangueira brings to a comparatively more numerous collective the sharing of processes of anti-culture, that Hélió had always lived, in a complete agreement with his ‘power to be free to experiment’ (Lagnado, 2002)<sup>67</sup> and through an experimental practice of inversion of the natural, conventional and mundane processes, of time and space: swapping night with day, occupying freely the divisions of the family house (Carneiro, 2004, 180)<sup>68</sup>. This coincidence is noted by Haroldo de Campos, who refers a ‘Proustian retrieval of childhood or of the past, of the experience of the past’, by which ‘the *Parangolé* is linked to Hélió’s experience with the Mangueira slum’ (Oiticica, 1996, p. 219)<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> *Barracão, Crelazer (Shanty, Creleisure)*

<sup>67</sup> *Manuscripts*, September 1973.

<sup>68</sup> ‘On the family environment there was respect and incentive for the different children’s plays. Hélió and his brothers could, for instance, change the house to build their games. (...) they had an enormous anthill on the bedroom, they founded a city made of paper on the living room naming streets and its fictitious inhabitants. During one of their parent’s trips, and with the support of the maid, they swapped day time with night time, causing problems with the mail man, delivery people and the neighbours couldn’t understand the night time noise’.

<sup>69</sup> Haroldo de Campos, *Asa delta para o êxtase (Hang glider to ecstasy)*, interview with Lenora de Barros.

### 3. 'GALACTIC DWELLINGS': CREATIVE EXERCISES FOR THE CHANGE OF THE MODE OF BEING

It is still the operation of annihilation of a current mode of being, by the return to the unconditioned and the search for a state of latency, that directs Hélio Oiticica on the following development of his 'live proposition' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 103)<sup>70</sup>, expanding the *Parangolé* experience into the environment. Oiticica characterizes it as 'anti-art par excellence', the role of the artist no longer that of creator but of motivator for creation, proposing 'a creative realization (...) exempt of moral, intellectual or aesthetical premises (...) an attitude also creative' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 77)<sup>71</sup>, yet dismissing the aim to 'create a "new aesthetics of the anti-art"' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 79)<sup>72</sup>. From Oiticica's descriptions it is possible to establish, within that course that follows the 'clue for the creative state' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 102)<sup>73</sup>, an evolution on what he understands as participation of the spectator, who is induced into dynamics of perception (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 104)<sup>74</sup>, introspection (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 104)<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> *O aparecimento do supra-sensorial na arte brasileira (The emergence of the supra-sensorial on the Brazilian art).*

<sup>71</sup> *Anotações sobre o Parangolé (Notes on the Parangolé).*

<sup>72</sup> On another text, Hélio specifies what he understands by 'anti-art' – 'to be anti-art': '(...) in spite of the quixotic character of the positions, which will not adjust to consumerism or to spectacle, I SUBSIST – the confirmation of a intellectual, poetic, creative subsistence that holds, that establishes permanently critical positions, putting in question the very problem of artistic creation (particularly I strive for disintegrate it, dissect it, from the beginning of all my evolution, that may be named as anti-art (...)) I have already criticized the concept of anti-art itself, showing that it is more a conceptual position, a principle that presides to a conduct (...) than a type of art (...) [as in the *General Project* of Décio Pignatari], used as "being anti-art", September 1971, *Manuscritos*, Programa HO (*Manuscripts*, Programme HO) (translation by me).

<sup>73</sup> *O aparecimento do supra-sensorial na arte brasileira (The emergence of the supra-sensorial on the Brazilian art).*

<sup>74</sup> 'it is an attempt to generate creative exercises through increasingly open propositions, dispensing with even the object as it has come to be categorized. These are not painting-sculpture-poem fusions, palpable works, though they may exhibit this aspect; they are directed at the senses in order that through them, through "total perception", they may lead the individual to a "suprasensation", to the expansion of his usual sensory capacities, to the discovery of his internal creative centre, of his dormant expressive spontaneity, linked to the quotidian'.

and creative availability (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 102)<sup>76</sup>, by the 'direct contact' with an environment created for the behaviour (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 100)<sup>77</sup>, that is, for the mobilization and directing of consciousness through an experimental implication of the body/mind/environment complex. Hence, the creation of these 'privileged places' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 69)<sup>78</sup>, or 'galactic dwellings' (Oiticica, 1996, p. 221)<sup>79</sup>, sites for the change of the mode of being, allows a significant homology with mythical structures that re-actualize the origin myth, namely the structure of the 'centre of the world' – in continuity with the structures of the 'magic flight' and of the 'lost paradise', as Haroldo de Campos intuited – which reiterate the initiatory pattern of a 'new gestation followed by birth', revealing the 'nostalgia for paradise' or, in the words of Hélio Oiticica about *Tropicália* (*Tropicalia*) (fig. 18), 'the nostalgia of the primitive man'<sup>80</sup>. His first environments, respectively *Tropicália* and *Éden*<sup>81</sup>, have a plastic character directly apprehensible by perception, which prepares a dynamics of consciousness that is not processed by logics, by reasoning or by intellectual

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<sup>75</sup> 'In my propositions, I seek to "open" the participator to himself – there is a process of interior expansion, a dive into the self, necessary for such a discovery of creative process – action would be the completion of it'.

<sup>76</sup> 'I must insist that the search, here, is not for a "new conditioning" of the participator, but an overturning of every conditioning in the quest for individual liberty, through increasingly open propositions, aimed at making each person find within themselves, through accessibility, through improvisation, their internal liberty, the path for a creative state – what Mário Pedrosa prophetically defined as the "experimental exercise of liberty"'.

<sup>77</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> May 1967, *Perguntas e respostas para Mário Barata* (*Questions and answers to Mário Barata*)

<sup>78</sup> *Bases fundamentais para uma definição do Parangolé* (*Fundamental bases for a definition of the Parangolé*).

<sup>79</sup> Haroldo de Campos, *Asa delta para o êxtase* (*Hang glider to ecstasy*), interview with Lenora de Barros.

<sup>80</sup> Oiticica refers that 'the environment is deliberately anti-technological, maybe even non modern in that sense: I want to make man return to the land – there is here the nostalgia of the primitive man', an intent explained by the episode of a visit to Mangueira, with Raimundo Amado and his wife Ilíria, during which 'she genially observed: I have the impression of stepping the land again – I kept this observation for ever, because on that moment it revealed something that I had not been able to formulate although I felt it and that, I concluded, would be fundamental for those who wish a social "unconditioning"', 15<sup>th</sup> May 1967, *Perguntas e respostas para Mário Barata* (*Questions and answers to Mário Barata*) (Figueiredo, 1986, pp. 99-100).

<sup>81</sup> *Tropicália* and *Éden* were presented juxtaposed on the exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, in London, in 1967, as well as on the exhibition 'Tropicália', curated by Carlos Basualdo, at the Barbican Centre Gallery, in London, in 2006, the version that I experienced.



exercise but, primarily, by an 'availability' – enabling the integration of the diversity of planes of significance and of movements within consciousness. These environments seem to be the unfolding of the attributes of the individual *Parangolé*, in spatial organizations that nevertheless discriminate stages for the change of the mode of being.

The 'labyrinth' *Tropicália* is a tactile-sensory penetrable (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 115)<sup>82</sup>, multi-stimulating, a perceptive accelerator that tries to cause a contrast within the arisen dynamics of consciousness, first, during the 'route' and, afterwards, on the arrival at the 'centre': the course aims at suggesting the oscillatory movement of the '*quebradas*'<sup>83</sup> of the slum and the perceptive appeal of that experience, while on the terminal space the images of a TV set superpose all the former impressions, 'devouring the participator' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 107)<sup>84</sup>. That contrast invokes on the participator the situation of a being devoured, which turned *Tropicália*, according to the artist, into the 'most anthropophagic work in Brazilian art'. The abrupt change of the mode of being reached at the centre of the labyrinth suggests the mythical pattern of the 'initiator death', to which the whole of the substantive designation of *Tropicália*, from Oiticica's writings, also concurs: penetrable, labyrinth, devouring and, significantly, anthropophagy. Eliade explains the function and significance of the 'initiator cabin' on the settings of 'initiator death' of the archaic communities: entering in the cabin is equivalent to entering the belly of the devouring monster, a tube where the initiate is digested, also representing the uterus, that is, the return to

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<sup>82</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> March 1968.

<sup>83</sup> Narrow swerving inner paths.

<sup>84</sup> The overwhelming presence of the TV set, a box of light and sound at the end of the dimmed 'labyrinth', besides suspending all previous impressions of the route to the centre, grabs the attention of the spectator, in the expectation of relevant knowledge to unravel the present riddle.

an embryonic state<sup>85</sup> that is not a repetition of the first gestation and carnal birth, but a temporary return to the pre-cosmic mode, virtual, also symbolized by night or darkness, followed by a rebirth that may be equaled to the 'creation of the world' (Eliade, 1995, p. 36)<sup>86</sup>. In that context, the 'labyrinth' represents the idea of a 'dangerous passage' (Eliade, 1995, p. 62), assuming the dimension of an initiatory ordeal, as we shall see in *Éden*. Eliade informs us that death is symbolized, among other signals, by forgetfulness of the past (Eliade, 1995, p. 35)<sup>87</sup> that, in *Tropicália*, may be equated to the erasure of the 'sensory creation', to the cancelling of the 'imagery sense' of the participator, caused by the preponderant presence of the TV set (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 107)<sup>88</sup>. The mythical pattern of 'initiatory death', originally linked to the rites of puberty and legitimizing primarily the break of the connection with the family, namely of the maternal possessive bond (Eliade, 1995, p. 8)<sup>89</sup>, evolves to more violent forms in response to the evolution of the cultural complexes. The origin of anthropophagy (of cannibalism, head-hunting, human sacrifice) is traced not within the most archaic levels of culture but on later paleo-agricultural strata (Eliade, 1971, p. 46), converging with the origin myth that narrates the death of the Superhuman Being – assassinated by men after trying to kill them in order to

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<sup>85</sup> The TV is set low, causing the spectator to assume an embryonic position in order to watch it, as Michael Asbury accurately pointed out (conversation at Asbury's home, 18<sup>th</sup> August 2010).

<sup>86</sup> 'The memory of the secluded initiatory hut, far away in the forest, was preserved in popular tales, even in those of Europe, long after puberty rites had ceased to be performed. Psychologists have shown the importance of certain archetypal images; and the cabin, the forest, and darkness are such images – they express the eternal psychodrama of a violent death followed by rebirth'.

<sup>87</sup> 'Characteristic here are death symbolized by a loss of consciousness, by circumcision, and by burial; forgetting the past; assimilation of the novices to ghosts; learning a new language. (...) a few examples of forgetting the past after initiation. (...) the novices (...) are resuscitated to a new life, tattooed, given a new name, they seem to entirely forgotten their past existence. They recognize neither their families nor their friends, they do not even remember their own names, and they behave as if they had forgotten how to perform even the most elementary acts'.

<sup>88</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> March 1968, '(...) it is the image that then devours the participator, since it is more active than his sensory creation'.

<sup>89</sup> 'The break is made in such a way as to produce a strong impression both on the mothers and the novices'.

resuscitate them in a 'modified' condition (Eliade, 1995, p. 131)<sup>90</sup>, or by spontaneous sacrifice with the purpose of creation (of the cosmos, of mankind, of edible plants...) – a primordial death inexorably tied to the subsequent human condition: mortal, sexual and cultural (condemned to the vicissitudes of subsistence, such as labour) (Eliade, 1995, p. 45). On the anthropophagic context, violent death is creative: the dismemberment, fragmentation, digestion of a sacrificed life constitutes a powerful transfer, the life concentrated in one person overflows from that person and manifests itself on a collective, cosmic scale, in 'myriads of animated forms' (Eliade, 1995, p. 186). On the mythical theme that nothing can be created without immolation (Eliade, 1995, 185)<sup>91</sup>, Eliade points out the importance of the perpetuation of the memory of what took place in *illo tempore* through the revelation and re-actualization of the mythical event during the initiation ritual, in an 'initiator death' that replicates the primordial death of the Superhuman Being. According to Eliade, the secularization of time brought about by historicism, that postulates that man is constituted not only by his origins, but also by its own history and by the history of the whole of mankind, on a sequence of qualitatively equivalent events, all similar and indistinctly significant, bears some consequences: it eliminates the distinction between the fabulous time of the commencement and the time that has succeeded it, it

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<sup>90</sup> 'We find initiatory death already justified in archaic cultures by an origin myth that can be summarized as follows: a Supernatural Being had attempted to renew men by killing them in order to bring them to life again "changed"; for one reason or another, men slew this Supernatural Being, but they later celebrated secret rites inspired by this drama; more precisely, the violent death of the Supernatural Being became the central mystery, reactualized on the occasion of each new initiation. (...) Since the primordial drama is repeated during initiation, the participants in an initiation also imitate the fate of the Supernatural Being: his death by violence'.

<sup>91</sup> 'the myth of the origin of edible plants – a myth very widely distributed – always has to do with the spontaneous sacrifice of the divine being. (...) this is the essential theme: that Creation cannot take place except from a living being who is immolated – a primordial androgynous giant, or a cosmic Male, or a Mother Goddess or a mythic Young Woman. We note, too, that this 'Creation' applies to all levels of existence: it may refer to the Creation of the Cosmos, or of humanity, or of one only particular human race, or of certain vegetable species or certain animals'.

extinguishes the magic that illuminates the *illud tempus*, it effaces the primordial 'fall' or 'rupture' (Eliade, 1995, pp. 55-56), the mythical factor that propels the creative movement towards ontological search. In *Tropicália*, the 'nostalgia of the primitive man' seems to be, primarily, the retrieval of an initiatory process through which Oiticica tries to state the distinction between the time of the beginnings (of creation) and the time that succeeds it, restoring the magic of *illud tempus* that he glimpsed on the synergetic experience of Mangueira; it is a 'galactic dwelling', a site for the discontinuation of profane duration<sup>92</sup>.

Articulating formulations both from the Supra-sensorial (*Supra-sensory*) and the idea of *Creleisure* (*Crelazer*) (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 114), *Éden* aims at the regeneration of the dynamics of consciousness, by means of a sequence of contrasting movements in which the balance between, on one side, the impact of the body/mind/environment stimuli and, on the other side, the spectre of the directing of consciousness, progressively leads to a conciliation that is favourable to a state of creative availability and creative accomplishment. In 1969, referring to *Éden* at the Whitechapel Gallery in London, Oiticica stated that

This wake-up process is a supra-sensorial one: the participator is shifted off his habitual field to a strange one that wakes up his internal fields of feeling and gives him conscience of some area of his Ego, where true values affirm themselves. If this doesn't happen, then participation has not taken place (Brett, 1969).

Guy Brett confirms at the same occasion that *Éden*

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<sup>92</sup> In *Hélio Couldn't Dance* (Braga, 2008, p. 55), Michael Asbury argues that the conception of time as duration, according to Bergson (who distinguished between pure time, that is, real duration, and mathematical time, that is, measurable duration), would 'become a central means of maintaining theoretical consistency through the radical transition that Oiticica would undergo' in the years that followed his neoconcrete work. Since real duration, or pure time, consists in a subjective experience, it follows that, by providing a qualified subjective experience through the work of art, the artist would be facilitating the discontinuation in real duration. The creation of 'galactic dwellings' coherently follows Oiticica's research concerning colour, space and time, as Asbury explains the latter: 'With regard to his neoconcrete paintings, Oiticica equated mathematics with the silence that emanated from within the work. Since silence can only be perceived as time, the work of art became inescapably associated with duration: in his view, it became duration' (Braga, 2008, p. 55).

is not a manifestation of the artist's personal choices. There is nothing there to be deciphered. The value of these works is not *proved* by reference to some external interpretation. Like games, or rituals, we bring them into existence by involving ourselves. They are effective only in so far as we truly take part.

Following *Éden*, the *Cama-Bólide* (*Bolide-Bed*) (fig. 19) is an alveolus for the 'concentration on leisure', for de-programming of conscious activity that constituted, as Oiticica pointed out, 'the first conflagration of the idea of *Creleisure* (*Crelazer*)' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 114). The three following *penetráveis*, with water (*Iemanjá*), leaves (*Lololiana*) and straw (*Cannabiana*) refrain from the contact with the surrounding environment and enable a directing of the consciousness towards the constant and uniform stimuli they present, which precede the contrasting experience, on the *bólide*-area 1 (with sand) and *bólide*-area 2 (with hay) (fig. 2), of handling similar stimuli now in delimited spaces opened to the surrounding environment; this sequence of five regions seems to aim at arising an actualization of the body/mind/environment relationship, enabled by the de-programming of the conscious activity reached at the *Cama-Bólide* (*Bolide-Bed*). The following three *penetráveis* aim at a 'new leisure-world', at the renewal of the body/mind/environment relationship: a black tent that 'concentrates the "hiding oneself", like an egg', induces and protects introspection – in its interior, visually stripped,

an idea of world aspires to its beginning: the world which creates itself through our leisure, in and around it, not as an escape, but as the apex of human desires' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 114);

the next *penetráveis* *Tia Ciata* (*Aunt Ciata*)<sup>93</sup> and *Ursa* (*She Bear*), guide the introspective movement, through a selection of perceptual and motor stimuli,

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<sup>93</sup> Tia Ciata (1854–1924), or Aunt Ciata, was the woman who brought the Samba from São Salvador da Bahia to Rio de Janeiro. She was a 'mãe de santo' ('mother of saint'), officiator of the Candomblé religion, an Afro-Brazilian religious system and practice of ecstasy. In 1922, she fled

seemingly towards the conscious perception of new connections between the body/mind/environment instances. *Éden* closes up with two empty areas, the 'area open to myth' and the 'Ninho' ('*Nest*') cells: the first, without proposition, is an enclosure, a space to 'be in the state of "founding" what does not yet exist, of "self-founding"' (Figueiredo, 1986, p. 114); the second, of 'non-environment, the possibility of creating everything', is a space to alternate between the 'self-founding' and the 'supra-self-creating'; both regions presuppose the creative accomplishment as the outcome of the dynamics of consciousness that has been mobilized for a regeneration.

*Éden* and its regions may be interpreted by the mythical structure of the 'centre of the world' and suggest an inherent 'nostalgia for paradise'. Eliade states that every dwelling is a 'centre of the world', the place of passage from the profane mode of being to the non-profane mode of being, symbolically the place that connects Earth and Heaven (Eliade, 1971, 383). For this reason,

every "construction", and every "contact" with a "centre" involves doing away with profane time, and entering the mythical *illud tempus* of creation (Eliade, 1971, 378),

since the spontaneous passage between earth and heaven was, in *illud tempus*, a privilege of all mankind. We find here a point on the structural continuity with the symbolism of ascension mentioned about *Parangolé*, in which the degeneration of the human condition is surmounted through the aspiration to transcendence and to freedom, consummated by the passage from a profane to a non profane mode of being.

The symbolism of the 'centre of the world' is intrinsically and explicitly bound to all the iconography concerning the techniques of ecstasy, such as

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from the policial persecution that enforced the prohibition of this religion in São Salvador, settling in Rio de Janeiro, her home being a place of musical creation and of religious cult.

shamanism, and of enstasis, such as Yôga (Eliade, 1961, pp. 41-47)<sup>94</sup> and, particularly in tantrism, associated with a cosmo-physiology in which the subtle organs of the body are homologized to the regions of the cosmos, on a process that leads towards a 'complete conversion of the body/mind complex (*metanoia*)' (Feurstein, 1998, 314). Concerning the symbolism of the 'centre of the world', Eliade speaks of two kinds of traditions, 'one group of traditions that evinces man's desire to place himself at the "centre of the world" without any effort, while another stresses the difficulty, and therefore the merit, of attaining it', pointing out that the predominance of the former, 'according to which it is easy to construct a centre in every man's house', discloses a 'nostalgia for Paradise' (Eliade, 1995, pp. 382-383).

Remarkably, man's desire to place himself naturally and permanently in a sacred place – at the 'centre of the world', at the core of reality and, through a short cut, transcend human condition – which was easier to satisfy on the frame of more archaic communities, became more difficult to achieve on subsequent societies, while notions such as initiatory trial would keep up with, and correspond to, the evolution of the latter. In the most archaic communities, the separation of the candidate from the family, into the forest, sufficed to symbolize

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<sup>94</sup> Particularly through the symbols of The Cosmic Mountain, the Tree of the World and the Central Pillar: 'The bridge or ladder between Heaven and Earth were possible because they were set up in a Centre of the World'. Eliade also elucidates the meaning of enstasis and specifies the difference between enstasis and ecstasy. Enstasis is the yogic *samādhi* – term that means unity, totality, total concentration, absorption, conjunction – the state of hyperconsciousness that is achieved from the moment the *yogin* has succeeded to 'concentrate' and 'meditate'. To avoid mistaking *samādhi* for *dhāraṇa*, term that designates the preliminar state of concentration before meditation (*dhyāna*) and towards the subsequent state of *hyperconsciousness* (*samādhi*), Eliade applies the term enstasis concerning the former (Eliade, 2000, p. 95). Since the purpose of Yôga is perfect autonomy, *enstasis*, this method cannot be considered 'ecstatic', such as the technique of shamanism, in which the shaman tries to attain the 'condition of the spirit' by ecstasy, ecstatic flight or trance: 'the *yogin*, no less than the shaman, attempts to do away with historical time and to return to a situation that is nonconditioned (hence paradoxical, impossible to imagine). But while the shaman can obtain this spontaneity only through his ecstasy (when he can "fly") and only for as long as his ecstasy lasts, the true yogin, he who has gained *samādhi* and became a *jīvan-mukta*, enjoys this nonconditioned situation continuously – that is, he has succeeded in definitively abolishing time and history' (Eliade, 2000, p. 340).

the initiatory death, from which the candidate would emerge with a new knowledge, as a new being, free of the bonds of childhood. In other archaic communities with seemingly more complex social systems, the acquisition of a new identity through an initiatory death gained a literal stance, and the permanence of the candidate in the forest or in the 'cabin of initiation' becomes longer (several months), and is marked by forms of violence inflicted on the body, such as different kinds of intoxication, beating, fasting, and prohibition against speech and sleep. These 'initiatory ordeals' aim at concretely altering the organization of sense experience and the sense of self, with loss of consciousness, of language, and forgetfulness of the past, thus bringing up a new identity (Eliade, 1995, pp. 21-34).

The labyrinth is inscribed on the category of initiatory trial, equivalent to the mandala, constituting as well an *imago mundi*, on which the initiation consists in entering the different regions of the mandala and correspondingly access the different levels of consciousness. The mandala, as the labyrinth, defends a 'centre', protects the candidate against the destructive forces of the unconscious or of the exterior<sup>95</sup>, and at the same time helps him to concentrate, so that he

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<sup>95</sup> This conception of the unconscious should be understood within the realm of psychology and parapsychology of the eastern tradition. The initiation by means of the mandala is part of a set of tantric Buddhist techniques, which emerged during the medieval period, and are originally from the archaic Hindu tradition of Yôga (Eliade, 1990, pp. 162-199, pp. 200-273, respectively Ch. V, Yoga Techniques in Buddhism, and Ch. VI, Yoga and Tantrism). This tradition, of oral transmission from master to disciple, as it is normal in experimental initiatory practices, subsequently produced a vast literature, late if compared to the long period of experimental perfecting that preceded it. The text *Yôga Sûtra of Pātañjali*, author believed to have lived during the III century B.C., is an example of the classical period of this tradition, and it is accepted by scholars that the knowledge and terminology displayed on them, such as the terms *vāsanā* and *samskāra* (that I elucidate shortly) are the repetition of a knowledge thoroughly tested, during a long period of time that goes back to before historical chronology and which, by its experimental feature, outdoes the practical-theoretical complex of the western tradition of psychology and parapsychology, as Eliade proclaims: 'Far before psychoanalysis, Yoga showed the importance of the role of the subconscious. The unconscious own dynamism is, according to Yoga, the most serious obstacle that the *yogin* must overcome. This is due to the [*vāsanās*, psychomental] latencies that wish to come forth to the light, wish to become, by actualizing themselves, states of consciousness (...) contrarily to psychoanalysis, Yoga believes that the subconscious can be mastered, through asceticism, and even conquered, by means of the technique of unification of the



finds his own centre (Eliade, 1961, pp. 51-56), by supplying him with points to direct and fixate consciousness. The differentiation of areas in Oiticica's *Éden* makes it possible to take it as a map of regions to go over on a body/mind/environment experience, and, therefore, brings the idea of *Éden* as a 'centre of the world' with initiatory character. Besides, an enclosure, the most ancient form of distinguishing a place, or the partition between two areas of a different kind, has, on a non-profane space, the double function of outlining a 'supremely "creational" place, because the source of all reality and consequently of energy and life is to be found there' (Eliade, 1971, 311), and of signalling the need to observe the 'gestures or procedures of approach' (Eliade, 1971, 370) that enable the auspicious entry in the premises. Still within the initiatory pattern of a new gestation, the embryonic symbolism present on the black tent of *Éden* (figs. 2 and 14) that 'concentrates the "hiding oneself", like an egg', and on the *Ninho* cells (fig. 15), points to, following Eliade's reading of the embryonic symbolism, the recommencement of an existence with all possibilities intact, the attainment of a higher condition of existence, or the beginning of a transcendent mode of being, homologizable to the gods' (Eliade, 1995, 58).

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states of consciousness (...) Since the psychological and parapsychological experience of the East, in general, and of Yoga in particular, is unquestionably vaster and more organized than the experience on which the occidental theories of the psyche are structured, it is likely that, on this issue as well, Yoga is right, and that the subconscious – paradoxical as this may seem – may be known, mastered and conquered', (Eliade, 2000, 62-63). Eliade explains the meaning of the terms *vāsanā* and *samskāra* as follows: the subconscious may assume the generic designation of *vāsanā*, while *samskāra* may designate the faculty of memory, of reproductive imagination, or of the conscious thought through which the mind creates forms. The *samskāras* are the subliminal activators (Feurstein, 1998, pp. 314-316), responsible for the activity of the subconscious, that rest as residues or impressions, while the *vāsanās* are the psychomental latencies, also subliminal, some originating in heredity, that permanently try to actualize themselves, manifesting in consciousness, in an impulse of 'self-extinction': '(...) every *vāsanā* manifested as a state of consciousness *perishes* as such; certainly, other *vāsanās* will replace it; but by actualizing itself it has simply ceased to be. The intensity of the biomental circuit arises precisely from the fact that "latencies" and "forms" always tend to cancel themselves' (Eliade, 1999, p. 45).

## THE DREAMER IN THE WORLD

Oiticica's subsequent propositions, around the conception of *Creleisure* (*Crelazer*) – *Ninhos*, *Barracão*, *Babylonests*<sup>96</sup> (figs. 14 and 15), *Newyorkaises*<sup>97</sup> – of creation of privileged places, of a 'centre of the world', follow the initiatory pattern of annihilation of a current mode of being. This initiatory pattern will only be abandoned with the *De-Mitificação do Parangolé* (*De-Mythification of the Parangolé*)<sup>98</sup>, that Oiticica explains in *Síntese-Parangolé* (*Parangolé-Synthesis*), text of 1972. Hélio dispenses, in his live proposition, with the course of induction to the creative availability and its respective plastic and iconographic apparatus ('perform should stop being preform'), to concentrate on an 'absorption of time' ('to feed the moment') aiming directly at the accomplishment of the creative potency ('the taking over of the aptness of inventing'). *Síntese-Parangolé* is 'open experimentation'. The nostalgia of mythicized states disappears from the *Parangolé* experiment – the worry with the 'sensorial nonconditioning': the capes become 'exploitable units without intentional previsions', and from the *Parangolé*'s original experiment rest the 'circumstantial situations'; on dance, from the aspiration towards the mythical dimension remains the 'inventive liberation of the capacities of play'; on performance, as we have seen, 'perform should stop being preform it should rather be simultaneous action' (Oiticica, 1996, p. 166). The *Topological Ready-Mades* and the *Magic Squares* are what he considers, in 1977, the *Prelude to the New* on that process of de-mythification (Oiticica, 1996, p. 215); Oiticica strips those realizations of every attribute in

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<sup>96</sup> See notes 8 and 36.

<sup>97</sup> *Newyorkaises* is a book written by Hélio Oiticica during his stay in New York, in the 1970's, that includes reflections on his work and on that of several authors from different areas of art, such as music. The book was never published.

<sup>98</sup> Series of *Parangolé* capes conceived during Oiticica's stay in New York.

order to concentrate on some of its creative potentialities, in a 'program of discovery' (Oiticica, 1996, p. 195): to shift the angle-position of an elastic rubber, on the *Topological Ready-Made Nr. 3* (fig. 17), or of a square cardboard, on the *New Topological Ready-Made Landscape Nr. 4* (fig. 18), or even 'rest on the colour' (Oiticica, 1996, p. 193), on the *Penetrável Invenção da Cor Magic Square 3* (*Penetrable Invention of Colour Magic Square 3*, fig. 19). In these works, while dismissing the initiatory pattern inherent to the creation of privileged places and, consequently, the 'nostalgia of myth', Oiticica seemingly preserves the mythical factor of the original action, as we have seen concerning the *Contra-Bólido*. The original action situates his creative motivation on the realm of a radical mythology, in which 'a recent innovation is invested with all the prestige of the primordial revelations' (Eliade, 1995, pp. xi-xii)<sup>99</sup> because it actualizes the creative potency from which it emerges.

Finally, the live experience on the streets and his incorporation of the elements of the quotidian, the poetic urgency that would feature his *Delirium Ambulatorium*<sup>100</sup>, in 1978, is the same exercise of passage from a profane mode of being into a non profane mode of being, the free access to the creative potency that Oiticica practiced since his childhood; now, however, freed from the technologies and languages that absorbed him during the process of passage of 'painting into space' until the outcome accomplished with the 'live proposition'.

*Delirium Ambulatorium* seems to be lived as a 'reverie of anima', focusing on

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<sup>99</sup> 'in contrast to modern society, primitive societies have accepted all innovations as so many revelations, hence as having a superhuman origin. The objects or weapons that were borrowed, the behaviour patterns and institutions that were imitated, the myths of beliefs that were assimilated, were believed to be charged with magico-religious power, indeed, it was for this reason that they had been noticed and the effort made to acquire them. (...) and since traditional societies have no historical memory in the strict sense, it took only a few generations, sometimes even less, for a recent innovation to be invested with all the prestige of the primordial revelations'.

<sup>100</sup> *Delirium Ambulatorium* is Helio Oiticica's proposition to participate on the event *Mitos Vadios* (*Vagrant Myths*), in São Paulo, 1978: a walk around the abandoned area with the duration of his performance during which he would take items brought from the streets of Rio de Janeiro.

beings and objects of the world which, transformed into supports for the dynamics of consciousness, are as many revelations of the creative potency, origin of poetic imagery, of creation, as Gaston Bachelard puts it:

The reverie that works poetically does not halt before any frontier – a space of union of our being's intimacy who dreams of the intimacy of the beings who we dream about. It is in these composite intimacies that a poetics of reverie is coordinated. The whole being of the world is poetically amalgamated around the *cogito* of the dreamer (...) The *cogito* of the dreamer does not follow complicated prefaces, it is easy, it is sincere, it is very naturally linked to its complement of object. The good things, the pleasant things offer themselves in all their naivety to the naïve dreamer. And the dreams accumulate around a familiar object. The object is, hence, the reverie's companion for the dreamer. Easy certainties enrich the dreamer. A communication of being is made, in both senses, between the dreamer and his world (Bachelard, 1986, p. 140)<sup>101</sup>.

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<sup>101</sup> 'La rêverie qui travaille poétiquement nous maintient dans un espace d'intimité qui ne s'arrête à aucune frontière – espace unissant l'intimité de notre être qui rêve à l'intimité des êtres que nous rêvons. C'est en ces intimités composites que se coordonne une poétique de la rêverie. Tout être du monde s'amasse poétiquement autour du *cogito* du rêveur. (...) Le *cogito* du rêveur ne suit pas de si compliqués preambules. Il est facile, il est sincère, il est lié tout naturellement à son complément d'objet. Les bonnes choses, les douces choses s'offrent en toute naïveté au rêveur naïf. Et les songes s'accumulent en face d'un objet familier. L'objet est alors le compagnon de rêverie du rêveur. Des certitudes faciles viennent enrichir le rêveur. Une communication d'être se fait, dans les deux sens, entre le rêveur et son monde' (translation by me).

IMAGES

CHAPTER II

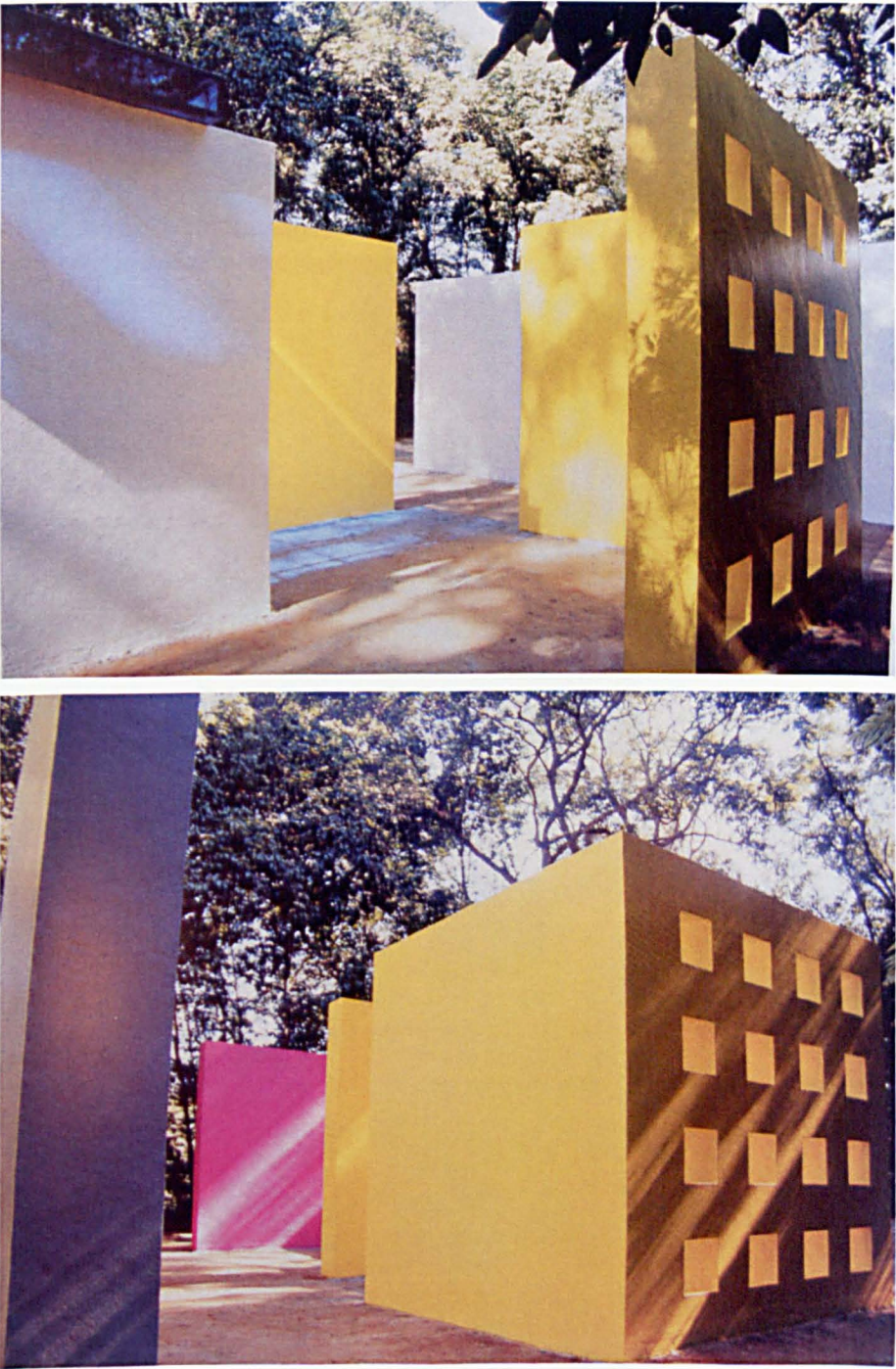


Fig. 1 – Hélio Oiticica, *Invention of Colour, Penetrable De Luxe, Magic Square Series*, construction 2000, Museu do Açu, Rio de Janeiro (Oiticica, 2008, p. 14).



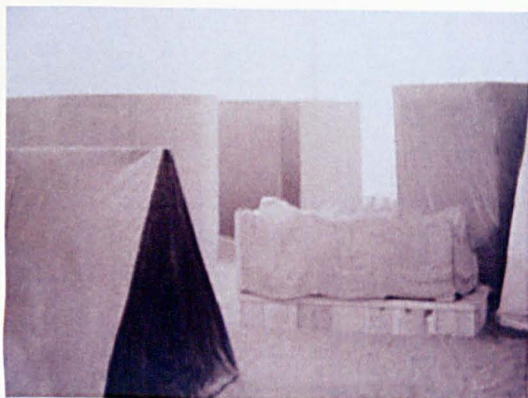
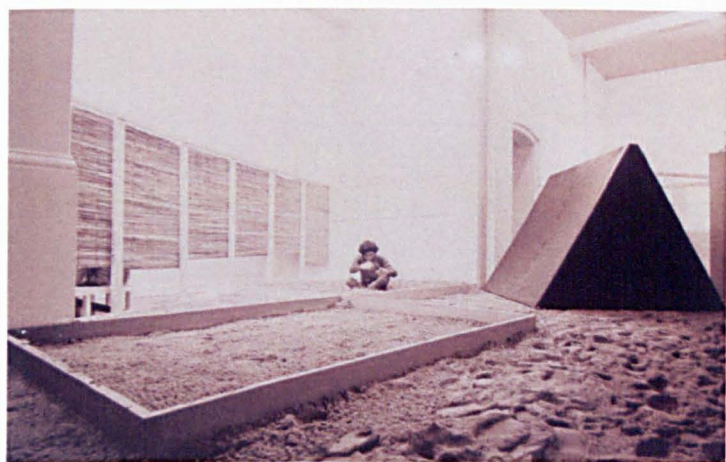


Fig. 2 – Hélio Oiticica, *Eden, Whitechapel Experiment*, Whitechapel Gallery, 1969 (Oiticica, 2008, pp. 204, 197, 203).





Fig. 3 – *Counter-Bolide nr. 1, Return earth to the earth*, 1979, performed at the Caju Landfill, “Kleemania” happening, celebrating Paul Klee birthday (Oiticica, 2008, p. 268).





Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Fig. 4 and 5 – *B7 Glass Bolide 1*, 1963 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 11), *B15 Glass Bolide 4 'Earth'*, 1964 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 10).

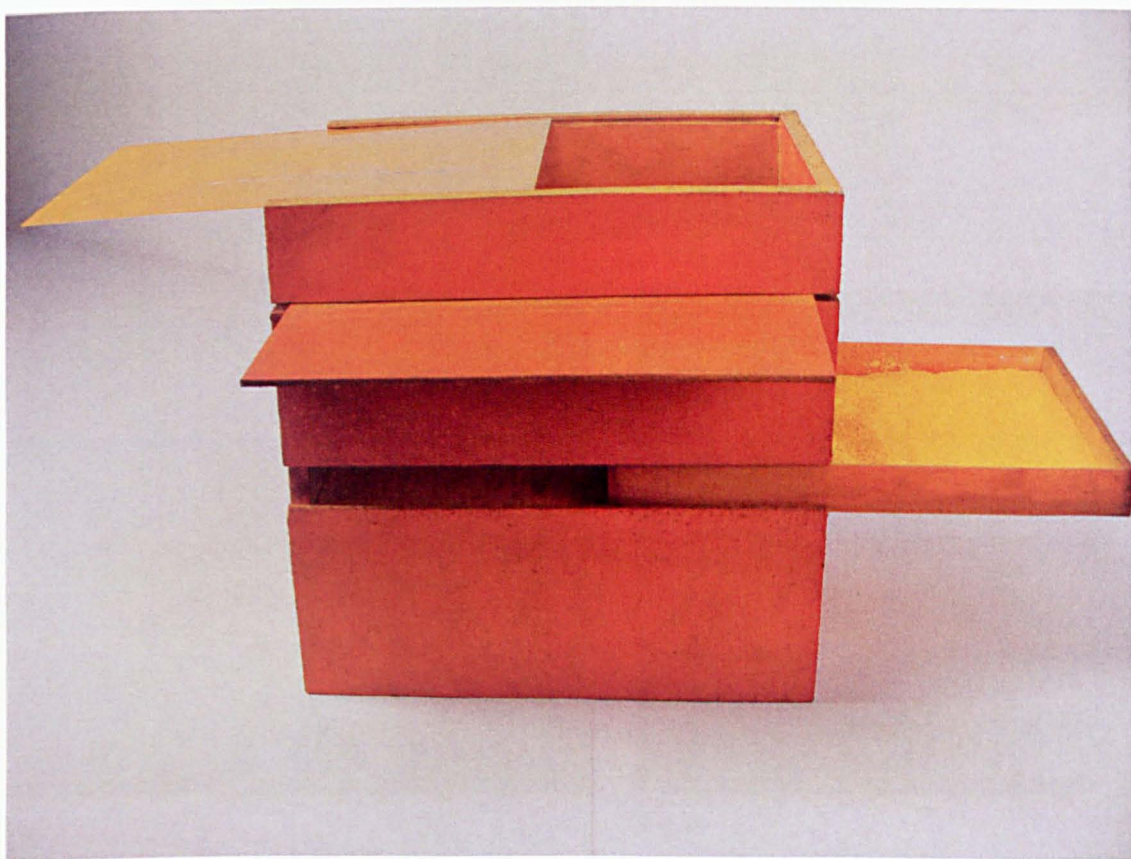


Fig. 6 – *B14 Box Bolide 11*, 1964 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 13).



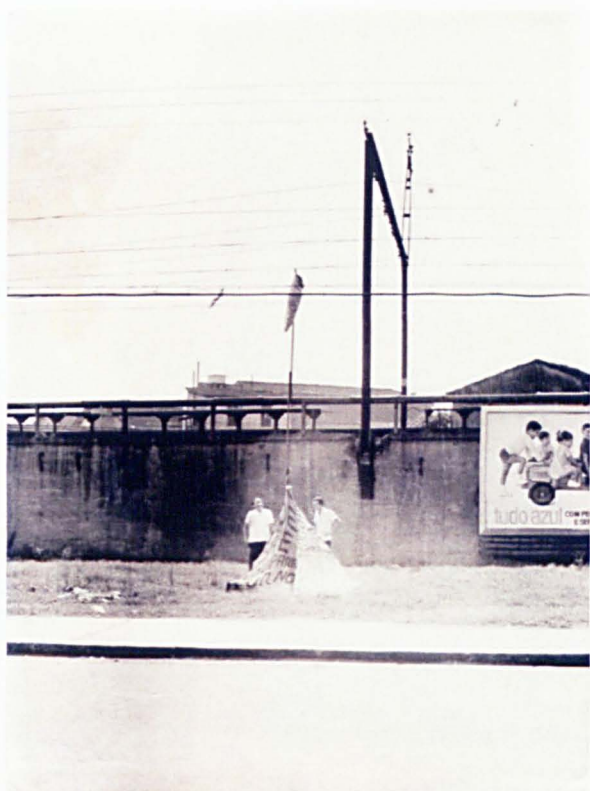


Fig. 7 – *The proclamation of the Parangolé*, 1964. Hélio Oiticica and Jackson Ribeiro (Oiticica, 2008, p. 165).

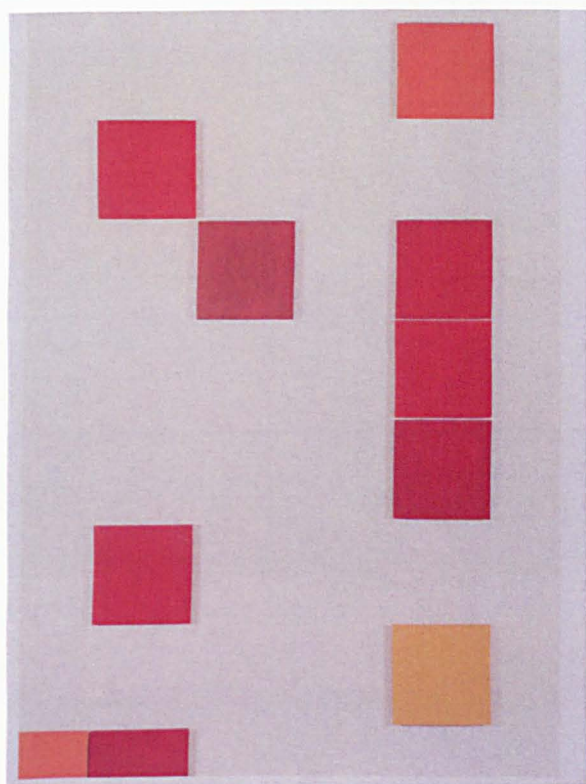


Fig. 8

Fig. 8 and 9 – *Inventions*, 1959 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 87), *Monochromes*, 1959 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 89).

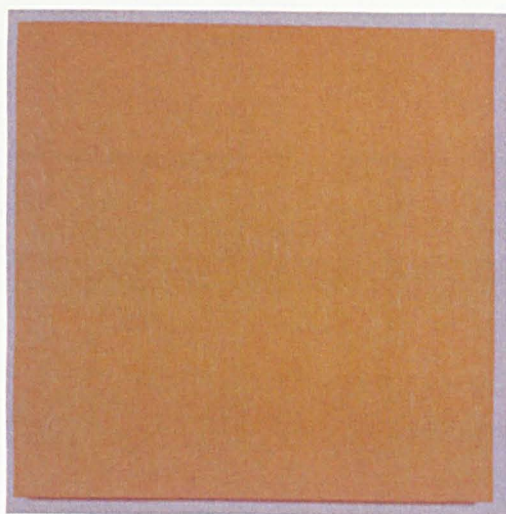


Fig. 9

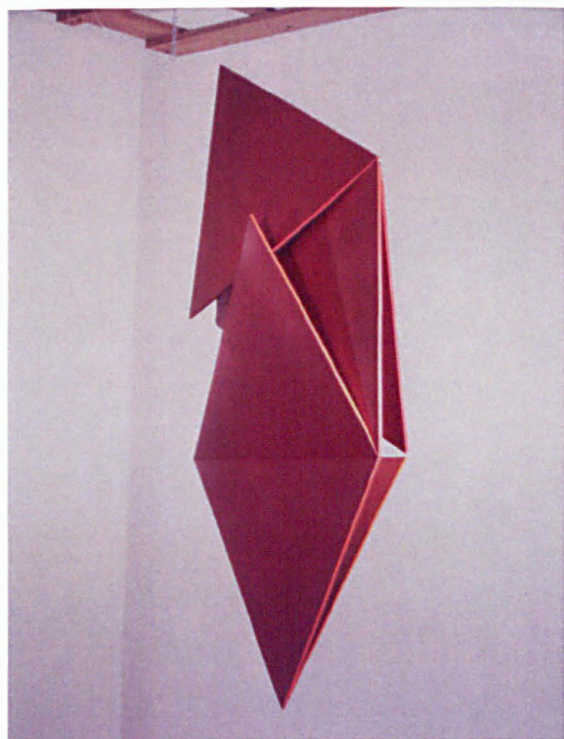


Fig. 10

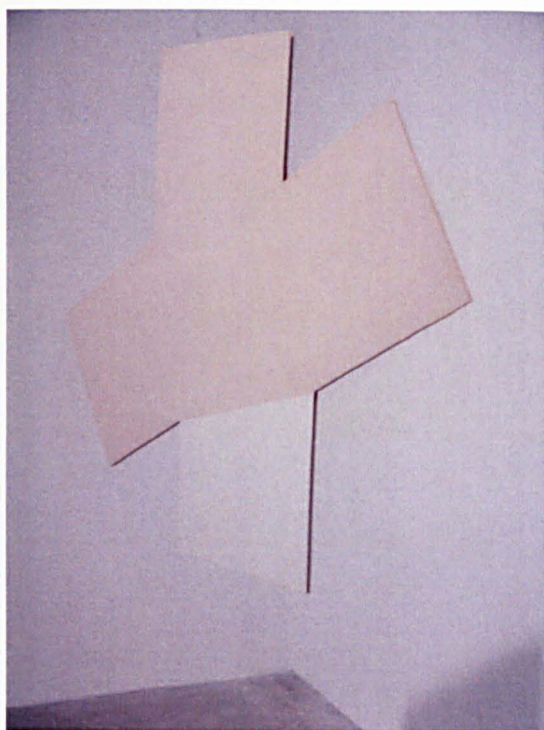


Fig. 11

Fig. 10 and 11 – *Spatial Reliefs*, 1960 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 93), *Bilateral 'Teman'*, 1959 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 97).

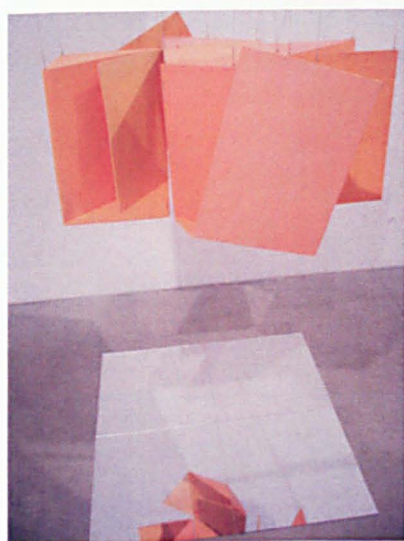


Fig. 12

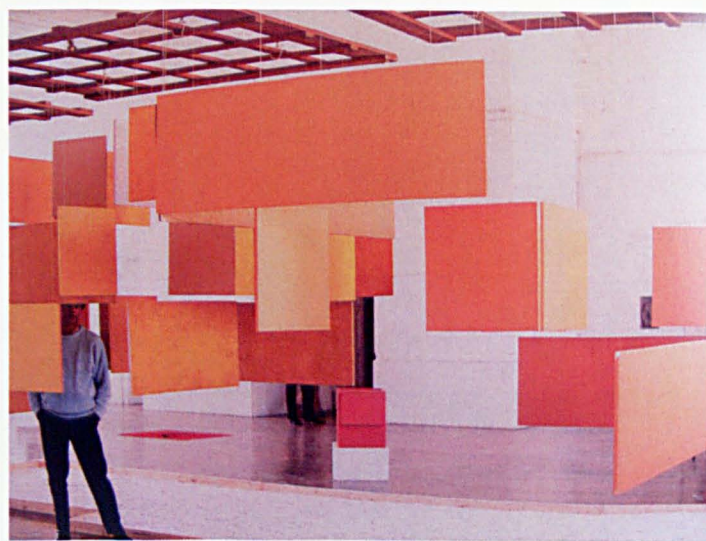


Fig. 13

Fig. 12 and 13 – *Nucleus NC1*, 1960 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 99), *NC 3, NC4, NC6 Grand Nucleus*, 1960-63 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 8).



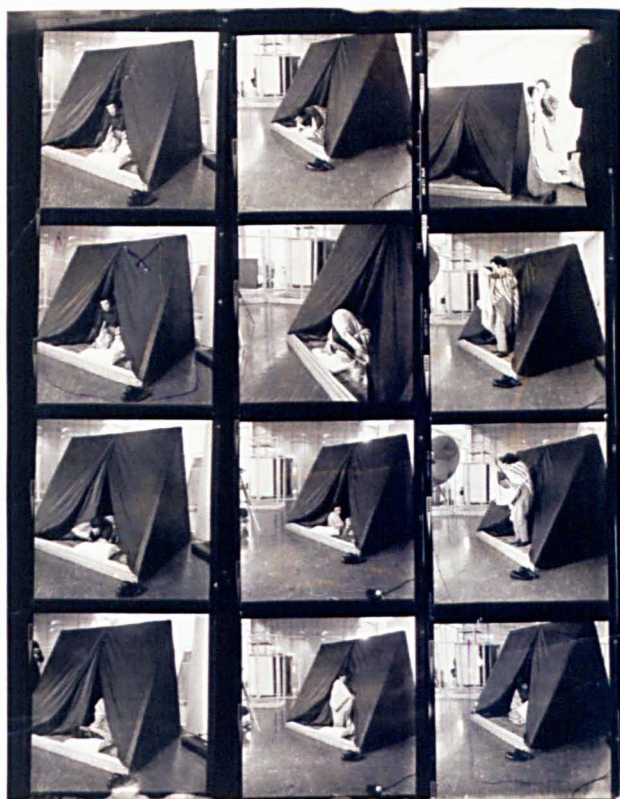


Fig. 14 – *Nest at Eden, Whitechapel Experiment*, Whitechapel Gallery, London, 1969 (Projeto HO).

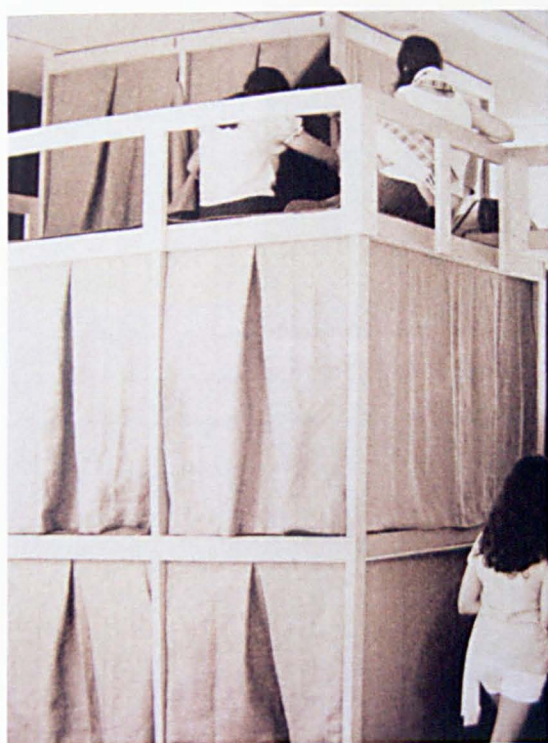


Fig. 15 – *Nests*, Exhibition *Information*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1970 (Oiticica, 2008, p. 213).

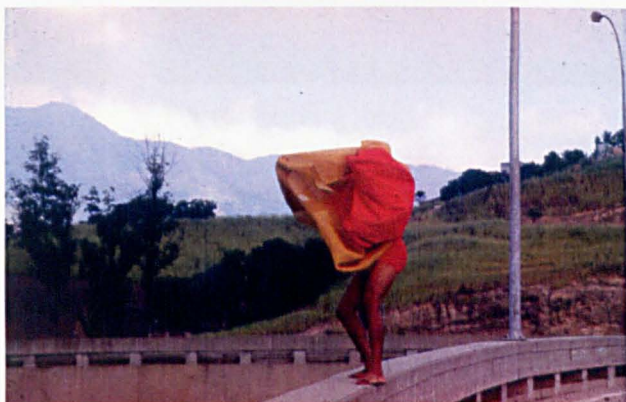


Fig. 16 – *Parangolé Experiment*, Mangueira, Rio de Janeiro (Projeto HO).



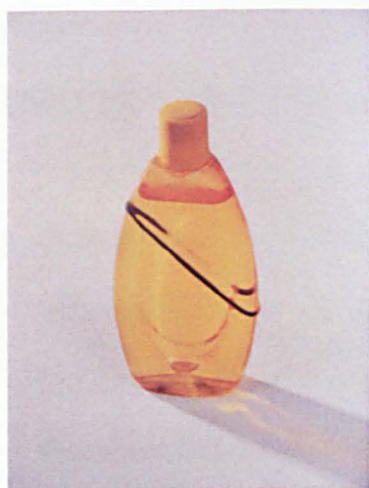


Fig. 17

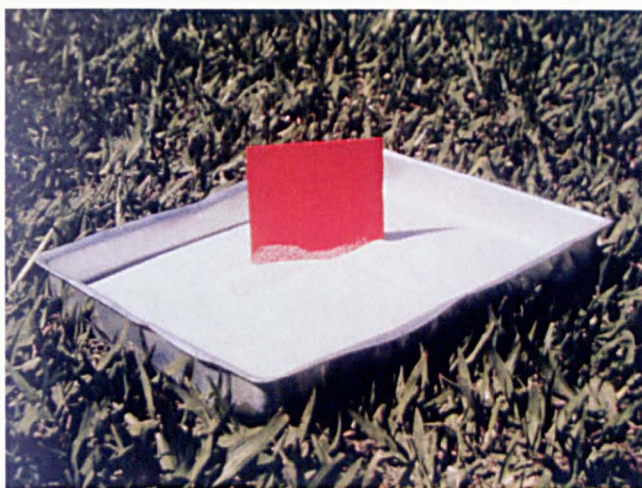


Fig. 18

Fig. 17 and 18 – *Topological Ready-Made Nr. 2, Topological Ready-Made Landscape nr. 4* (Oiticica, 2008, p. 256).

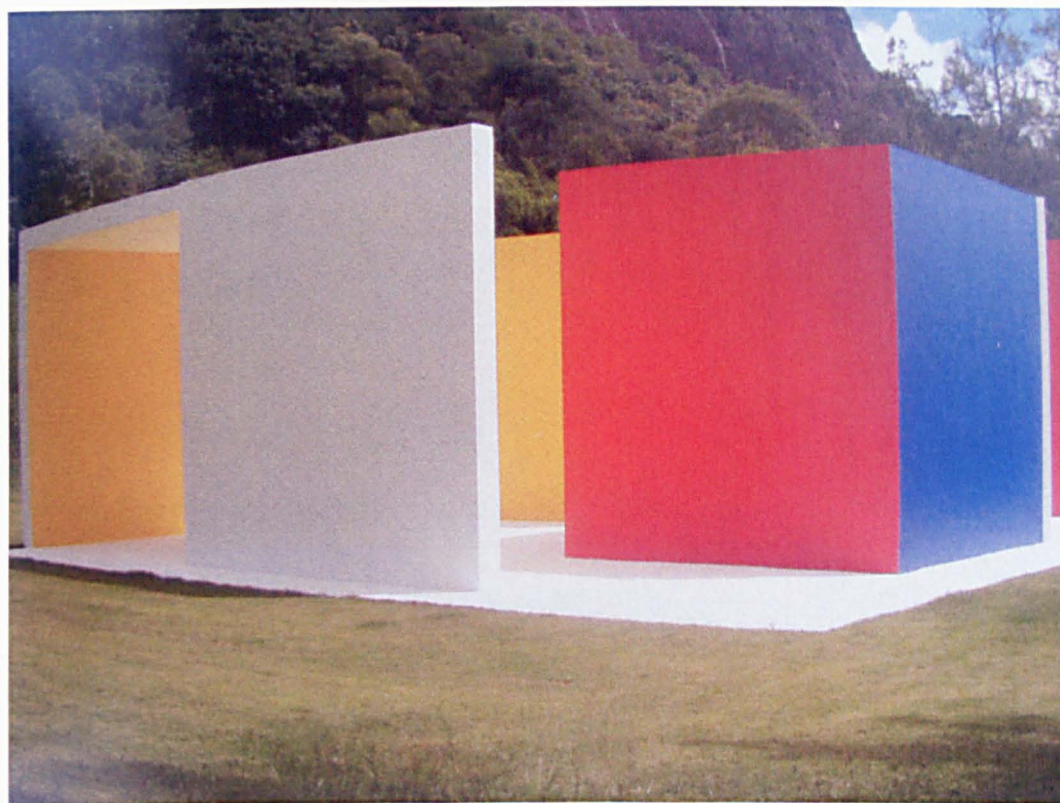


Fig. 19 – *Penetrable Invention of Colour, Magic Square Nr.3*, Itaipava, Rio de Janeiro .

## CHAPTER III

### ENCIRCLING THE FORCE OF LIFE. JIRO YOSHIHARA AND GUTAI.

- CONCEPTION CANNOT PRECEDE ACTION
- THE BODY WITHIN THE CONTINUUM OF MATTER
- EMBODYING THE CREATIVE POTENCY
- PRIMORDIAL IMAGES IN GUTAI
  - THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD
    - 1. THE CIRCLE
    - 2. THE ENCLOSURE
  - CHANGE IN THE MODE OF BEING
    - 1. INITIATION: THE INITIATORY CABIN
    - 2. THE RUPTURE OF PLANE
  - ASCENSION
    - 1. FLIGHT
    - 2. HAND-GLIDER TO ECSTASY
  - RETURN TO THE ORIGIN
    - 1. THE EMBRYO
    - 2. THE MERGING OF ALL FORMS
  - COSMOLOGICAL SOLIDARITY
    - 1. THE SOIL IN PROCESS
    - 2. GERMINAL LUMINOSITIES
    - 3. INTEGRATION OF THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE
  - THE UNION OF THE POLARITIES

In this chapter I present a reading of the work by the Gutai centred on the motivating and inspirational power of the group's mentor, Jiro Yoshihara, and his momentous initiatives during the first experimental years of the group's practice, from 1954 to 1958. Jiro Yoshihara's eagerness for a new aesthetics is presented through two main standpoints: his disregard for discursive considerations concerning the work of art or the creative process, and the substance of his 'extraordinary intuition'<sup>1</sup>.

Jiro Yoshihara's contempt for theoretical reasoning in what concerned representation, content or meaning in the work of art or in artistic practice that was aimed at the new and, conversely, his certainty about the creative outcome of a direct contact with the material, are viewed as factors that prompted the emerging physicality of the Gutai artists. Although before becoming part of the Gutai group, Kazuo Shiraga was already painting with his feet and Saburo Murakami was also already painting by throwing an inked ball at the surface (to mention only two examples within the group), with Yoshihara's mentorship they experienced a bodily activation that instinctively responded to a deviation from the educated workings of the mind and, thus, from the trained conditionings of the body.

By challenging the Gutai artists with outdoor and stage exhibition settings, Jiro Yoshihara followed his 'extraordinary intuition', which places, as I argue, the Gutai creative enterprise within the tradition that originated the Japanese performative arts. In the analysis of the pattern of imagery of the Gutai works – that of 'absolute beginning' – I consider that their affinities with the *kami* celebrations go beyond a cultural phenomenon or artistic procedure of mere formal appropriation, and I root these affinities deeply into the creative teleology

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<sup>1</sup> Expression that Alfred Pacquement used to entitle his article on the catalogue of the exhibition *Le Japon des Avant-Gardes*, at the Centre George Pompidou, Paris, in 1986.

extolled by the immemorial 'origin myth' (in this case, the myth of the rock cave, which originated the performative traditions of the *Noh*, *kagura* and *waka*, as presented further into the chapter), and aiming at the enactment of the vital bond between artist, matter and the accomplishment of the creative drive.



## ENCIRCLING THE FORCE OF LIFE. JIRO YOSHIHARA AND GUTAI.

'Conception cannot precede action. What exists prior to expression is something ambiguous, like temperature. The only work that can prove that there is something, rather than nothing, which necessitates discovery is the one that has been created and understood. Artists are the ones who return to the desolate soil of experience without words so that they may bring this into consciousness.'

Maurice Merleau-Ponty<sup>2</sup>

### CONCEPTION CANNOT PRECEDE ACTION

While it is settled that the term Gutai (具体) conveys the sense of 'concrete' (Bertozzi, 1991, p. 20)<sup>3</sup> and at the same time signifies 'embodiment' (Shoichi, 2004, 36) – its two components 'gu' and 'tai' standing respectively for 'instrument' and 'body' (Munroe, 1994, p. 84)<sup>4</sup>, it seems that the combination of both is perplexing, for it seems a slightly incoherent syntax, an unfinished logic

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<sup>2</sup> 'An artist speaks as if he were the first person ever to speak and paints as if nobody has ever painted before him. Thus, expression cannot be an interpretation of a previously well established concept. This is so because for a thought to be clear it must be a thought that I myself or others have already uttered. Conception cannot precede action. What exists prior to expression is something ambiguous, like temperature. The only work that can prove that there is something, rather than nothing, which necessitates discovery is the one which has been created and understood. Artists are the ones who return to the desolate soil of experience without words so that they may bring this into consciousness' (Merleau-Ponty, 1953, pp. 259–260). Mizuho Kato uses this quote to end her essay 'Searching for a boundary', in *Atsuko Tanaka: Search for an Unknown Aesthetic, 1954–2000*. In reflecting about the Gutai, I wanted to start from that stance.

<sup>3</sup> 'In literal translation Gutai means "concrete", and this not in the sense of "real", but a rather "spontaneous", "direct", with relation to the ability of expressing one's own thoughts and feelings unreflectedly and immediately'.

<sup>4</sup> 'The noun *gutai*, which literally means "concreteness", is composed of two characters: *gu*, signifying tool or means, and *tai*, signifying body or substance. Using this name, Gutai signified concrete enactments of individual character, emotion, and thought in opposition to cerebral and abstract aesthetics'.

or unaccomplished linguistic concept, presenting a mismanagement of language even within the designing possibilities of the Japanese linguistic system<sup>5</sup>.

In the Gutai group, a suspicion towards language percolates into every possible entry of theoretical discourse, whether it comes as texts, titles of works or titles of exhibitions, or even interviews. Theory is minimized to assertions that ensue from practice, even if through seeming paradoxes, which eventually resonate with a playful bias regarding discursive statement (Munroe, 1994, p. 89)<sup>6</sup>. This is more overt in the later reflections of Jiro Yoshihara, as he converged to the unifying core of his own artistic path with the paintings of circles: he succinct and cryptically acknowledged that he painted circles 'because they are convenient', 'emancipating him from the torture of what to create on each canvas', while at the same time confessed that he was

tormented with the fact that there have been times that I have been unable to draw a single circle satisfactorily. The fact that I have been unable to draw a single line makes me study the fundamental principles of art. Then, there remains a possibility of infinity in the form of endless trail (Yoshihara, 1967, p. 2)<sup>7</sup>.

Conceptual elusiveness, or dismissal of theoretical considerations, is significantly present from the outset of Gutai (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 42)<sup>8</sup>. The

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<sup>5</sup> Interview with Sen Uesaki, scholar and art archivist at the Digital Archive Research Centre, Keio University, Tokyo, September 2008. According to Yatsuo Yamamoto, the name Gutai was proposed by Shozo Shimamoto (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 30).

<sup>6</sup> 'Like so much of Gutai art, its prose [the statements of purpose and poetic and philosophical musings of the twelve issues of the Gutai Journal] is also a form of automatic gesture, uncensored self-expression, and naked and brave claims to new aesthetic territories'.

<sup>7</sup> 'I have been drawing circles exclusively these days. It is because this is convenient. No matter how spacious the canvas is, a single circle can fill it, and that, too, is a good thing. This also emancipates me from the torture of what to create on each canvas. (...) I cannot explain what significance those circles I have persistently drawn have'. Jiro Yoshihara: 'they're convenient (...) I don't have much time, so this was the easiest thing to do' (Haito, 2005, p. 187).

<sup>8</sup> 'Aside from the theoretical issues of the group, we should also remember Yoshihara's original intention to exclude literary or descriptive aspects altogether. When brainstorming he tried to expel every framework and preconceived idea which would tie artists down. The only rule, if any, was perhaps "Don't cause trouble to others". This was because they had become an object of criticism at the time for "lacking social common sense" or "failing to reflect the spirit of the age". But their instinctive and affirmative energy, actively looking for something "Omoroi", which

formation of the group was mainly prompted by an auspicious conjugation of personal factors centred in Jiro Yoshihara. The gathering of the group resulted as a natural consequence of his artistic vision and creative eagerness, of his acknowledgement within the artistic setting of the post-war Kansai area, and of the material means he possessed to pursue and implement a collective endeavour such as Gutai<sup>9</sup>. Yoshihara was born in 1905, and was 50 years old when the Gutai group reached its initial composition, in July of 1955<sup>10</sup>. Eighteen years

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means "interesting/amusing" in Osaka dialect, and their fresh way of looking at materials was actually in step with the major trends of the period'.

<sup>9</sup> Jiro Yoshihara had absorbed from the painter Fugita Tsuguharu, one of his artistic mentors, the conviction that 'in the realm of art, we must create works of new value, one of our own devising' (Munroe, 1994, p. 86), which Yoshihara would adopt as the Gutai group's motto: 'Create what has never existed before!' Coming from a wealthy family that ran a profitable business, which he later inherited, becoming the President of the the Yoshihara Seiyu (Cooking Oil) Company, Jiro Yoshihara had the means to support and develop his artistic practice (he possessed an impressive art library), and to facilitate the Gutai activities. Yoshihara was one of the judges at the Ashiya City Art Exhibition, which was held since 1948 in Ashiya, which gave him the chance to get to know and select young artists of the region, beginning with Shozo Shimamoto (Kawasaki, 2003, p. 146). 'He received no formal art training but was guided in his early twenties by two well-known painters. The first was Kamiyama Jiro (1895-1945), who has lived in Paris and was well-versed in contemporary European art and thought. The second was Fujita Tsuguharu (1886-1968), perhaps the most famous Japanese painter in Paris at the time. At Fugita's recommendation, Yoshihara was accepted to Nika-kai (Second Section Association) (...) this established Yoshihara at the forefront of Japanese vanguard painting. (...) He became a founder of the Ninth Room Association (Kiushitsu-kai), (...) in reaction against the more Fauvist-dominated Nika-kai. Yoshihara's association with Kiushitsu-kai, which was among the three most progressive arts groups in the prewar years established him as a leading spokesman for advanced art in Japan' (Munroe, 1994, p. 86).

<sup>10</sup> 'Regarding the exact time of the groups founding, such a moment is not easily defined due to the spontaneity of its birth and the number of founding members differs slightly depending on the source. (...) it seems appropriate to suggest that Gutai was founded around August, 1954'. (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 30); 'The Gutai group was founded in Osaka in December 1954. One of the founding members was Jiro Yoshihara, the leading head of the group, together with Masanobu Matoshi, Shozo Shimamoto, Chiyu Uemae, Tsuruko Yamazaki, Toshio Yoshida, and Michio Yoshihara, Jiro's son. In February 1955, they were joined by Akira Kanayama, Saburo Murakami, Kazuo Shiraga and Atsuko Tanaka, who formerly belonged to the Zero group. Finally, in July of the same year, Sadamasa Motonaga, Fujiko Shiraga, Itoko Ono and Yasuo Sumi entered the group' (Bertozzi, 1991, p. 17). The Zero kai was formed in 1952, with the premise that 'every work of art begins from nothing', dissatisfied with the association where they first met (New Production School Association, Shin-Seisaku-ha Kyokai). Their group began meeting at Shiraga's house in Amagasaki in the early 1950s. The Zero Kai showed only once, in the display windows of Osaka's Sogo Department Store, in 1954, and attracted Yoshihara's attention (Munroe, 1994, p. 89). Among the artists that helped forming the Gutai Art Association, and withdrew in 1955 or later, are Sadami Azuma, Kei Isetani, Tamiko Ueda, Hajime Okamoto, Toshiko Kinoshita (withdrew in 1958), Nobotu Sakamitsu (withdrew in 1958), Takeshi Shibata (withdrew in 1959), Yoshio Sekine (withdrew in 1959), Keizo Tanaka (withdrew in 1957), Toishiro Fujikawa, Yutaka Funai, and Hideo Yoshihara. Other artists that joined the Gutai group after 1955 are Teruyuki Tsubouchi and Yoshiko Hashigami (withdrew in 1956).

later, in its third 'generation'<sup>11</sup>, the group eventually disbanded after Yoshihara's death in February 1972. The ties of respect and admiration between the young Gutoi artists and Yoshihara have been expressed throughout the years, by the former, with a remarkably unchanged wholeheartedness (Munroe, 1994, p. 87)<sup>12</sup>. Nonetheless, the selection of members for the group and the assessment of their work followed criteria that could only be held by his charisma, as well as by a genuine conviction on, and ease with, the redundancy of discursive criticism:

Yoshihara's teaching method during the Gutoi period was very simple: giving no opinion about each artist's creative process, but judging only the finished artwork as "Good" or "No good" (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 27).

Partly with the same stance, and also with an unequivocal cohesive intent, at the first exhibition in which the group participated, the Seventh Yomiuri Nihon Independent Exhibition in March 1955, all the works of the twelve selected members bore the title 'Gutoi'. Later, throughout the 'early and middle periods', they would be called 'Work' or bear no title at all (Shoichi, 2004, p. 23)<sup>13</sup>. The fact that Yoshihara 'detested the exhibition of works with descriptive

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<sup>11</sup> According to Atsuo Yamamoto, the so called second generation of Gutoi artists joined the group during the first half of the 60s, until October 1965, when the Gutoi Journal published its last issue, the 14<sup>th</sup>, a discontinuation that derived from the fact that 'Gutoi, which in the mid-1960s became the so called representative of avant-garde Kansai art, no longer needed to practice self-justification' (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 38). Yamamoto refers to this stage as the Mid-Gutoi period, and also points the withdrawal of Yozo Ukita, in 1964, and of Atsuko Tanaka and Akira Kanayama, around the 15<sup>th</sup> Gutoi Art Exhibition in July 1965, as well as Shuji Mukai burning all his work in a field in Ibaraki city, as significant events in the closure of this stage. Among the artists of the Mid-Gutoi period are: Yuko Nasaka, Maekawa Tsuyoshi, Matsutani Takesada, Mukai Shuji, and also Norio Imai, Kumiko Imanaka, Ukita Yozo, Kimiko Ohara, Hiroshi Okada, Minoru Onoda, Shigeki Kitani, Yoshihiko Shioya, Masaya Sakamoto, Satoshi Tai, Ryuji Tanaka, Mishimasa Naohara, Takehiro Nabekura, Yoshida Minoru, and Hiroshi Watanabe. The third and last generation of the group include: Sadayuki Kawamura, Seiko Kanno, Joji Kikunami, Motonao Takasaki, Akiko Horio, Sadaharu Horio, Yutaka Matsuda, and Keiko Moriuchi.

<sup>12</sup> 'Yoshihara's relationship with his young protégés was strictly student-teacher. They called him sensei (honorific for "master" or "professor"), greatly respected his opinion and taste, and worked hard for his approval which apparently was not easy to win'.

<sup>13</sup> 'Generally speaking, literary and explanatory titles were avoided in Gutoi and almost invariably works are titled Work or Untitled. Following contact with Tapié, however, Shiraga regularly had to send his work abroad and some kind of title was needed to assist in creating a mental picture of each piece. Naturally, when shown at the locations of the Gutoi exhibition these titles were not used (...) Shiraga liked especially the Suidoken heroic Chinese stories, which

titles' (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 29) is revealing of his dislike of meaning or of any discursive translation of content, aspects of his all-encompassing objection to language that might result from discursive processes or discursive automatisms (Munroe, 1994, p. 83)<sup>14</sup>. If this is expressed in his dismissive attitude towards content in works of art and thus over theoretical pondering, conversely, his intuitive assessment of concrete statements in art which were candid and bore the energy of uniqueness and of universality was an empathic means for the development of the pressing creative drives in each of the Gutai artists, especially during the first and most experimental years of the group, from 1955 to 1958.

Therefore, understandably, the bond of empathy established through an appreciation of the artistic work is, in substance, the second ideological reference on the short text of the announcement of Gutai, in the first issue of the group's journal in 1955, and is immediately preceded by the reference to the intent of pursuing an exchange within the international world of art. According to Jiro Yoshihara's text (Yoshihara, 1955)<sup>15</sup>, the Gutai journal is envisaged as the 'chance to form a strong bond with the people of the world', and the motivation of the artists is 'to be able to form a deep affinity and win friendship through their work'. Contemporary art is taken as 'a free space providing maximum

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recounts the stories of 108 heroes (...) the thirty six most important characters are called Tenkoseim the other seventy two Chisatsuseim. Each has also the name of the star which carries their destiny. (...) Shiraga named the bigger works Tenkosei, and the smaller Chisatsusei' (Yamamoto, 2003, p. 184).

<sup>14</sup> 'Gutai art seemed to ignore such issues [of the contemporary culture] and denied figurative, realist, or symbolic content (...) Japanese critics faulted Gutai as a movement having scant theory – when, in fact, refuting the intellectualization of art was precisely its premise'.

<sup>15</sup> In: *Gutai Journal*, Issue 1, January 1955, Ashiya. I adopted Hoichi Shirai's translation On the occasion of Publication, from his book *What is Gutai?* (Shoichi, 2004, p. 37), instead of the translation that was published originally on the Gutai journal: 'The most important thing to us is that the present art is the most free position for these who are living this severe time, and they are deeply believing that the creation of the free position is utility for people's development. We earnestly wish to indicate the certification concretely that our spirits are free, and searching for fresh impressions in every creation to the end'.

release', with the belief that 'creativity in a free space will contribute to the development of the human race'. The artisanal edition of the journal bore more than 30 images reproducing works of 17 Gutoi artists and, Yoshihara's short text, besides opening to a worldwide bonding, extols two further guidelines, creative freedom and proximity between artistic disciplines:

It is our desire to embody the fact that our spirit is free. It is also our hope that no restrictions will be placed on the desire to experience fresh sensations through every form of expression (...) we hope to form closer ties with every artistic genre.

Later, on The Gutoi Art Manifesto, in 1956 (Shoichi, 2004, pp. 84–86)<sup>16</sup>, following the consolidating experience of the Outdoor Gutoi Art Exhibition, their second outdoor exhibition, Yoshihara further explains the ambition of 'bringing the material to life', and let it 'speak with a mighty voice' by filling it with an undying creative spirit, yet without forcing or submitting the former: 'Under the cloak of an intellectual aim, the materials have been completely murdered and can no longer speak to us'. Yoshihara's dislike for the 'clothing of the intellect' – its dependence on languages, on representation and on meaning – is thus reiterated, while the way to avoid the submission of the material is viewed through the 'combination of the human creative ability with the characteristics of the material in order to concretize the abstract space'. In the text, Yoshihara specifies that this union is established within the 'melting pot of psychic automatism'<sup>17</sup>, the work of the group consisting in a 'struggle to find an original method of creating that space', an undertaking that he then exemplifies by describing several works of the Gutoi artists. In the text – that would remain the only declaration ever published by the Gutoi as a group (Shinichiro, 1993, p.

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<sup>16</sup> Published in *Geijutsu Shincho*, December 1956. For the announcement of Gutoi, the Gutoi Art Manifest, titles of works and exhibitions, I use the translation of Hirai Soichi *What's Gutoi*, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>17</sup> See note 24.

21)<sup>18</sup> – the straightforward objective descriptions figure indeed as the best possible way of expressing, in writing, not only the ‘direct confrontation with matter as a *modus operandi*’ (Kato, 2004, p. 54), but also how ‘the quality and intensity of a work had to be communicated in a sensuous and intuitive way’ (Shoichi, 2004, p. 24)<sup>19</sup>, resulting in an ‘extremely dignified statement that astutely delineated the Gutai ideology’ (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 21) or, for that matter, of the ‘early Gutai ethos’ (Shoichi, 2004, p. 87).

The early period, acknowledged as the most experimental (Tiampo, 2003, p. 130)<sup>20</sup>, includes not only the formation of the group, with Yoshihara joining around him like-minded artists (Munroe, 1994, p. 87)<sup>21</sup>, but the preliminary participation of Gutai in an institutional exhibition<sup>22</sup> and, most importantly, the first Gutai Art Exhibitions<sup>23</sup>. The peculiarities of the synergy between the

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<sup>18</sup> ‘This was the only time that Gutai, a group with no set outline or articles of association, ever published any sort of manifestation throughout the entire history of its activities, but it was an extremely dignified statement that astutely delineated the Gutai ideology’.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Despite being their teacher, the guidance he provided was never more than a comment like “okay” or “no good”. (...) the quality and intensity of a work had to be communicated in a sensuous and intuitive way. Because of this, he had an extreme dislike for art that made use of representational or descriptive elements. This explains why the titles of many Gutai Works, particularly those from the early and middle periods, are either “Work” or bear no title at all. (...) it was Yoshihara’s conviction that art, a world which is constructed of purely perceptual elements, was a language that could supersede nation and race; and thus, was not fond of conceptual works’.

<sup>20</sup> ‘My proposition for a reassessment of the Gutai begins by looking at the strongest tendencies that emerged in the group between 1954 and 1958, the group’s most active period’.

<sup>21</sup> ‘During the immediate postwar years, Yoshihara emerged as an impresario in the reconstruction of the Kansai art world. In addition to the international avant-garde’s stimulus, artists were finding inspiration in a variety of indigenous cultural sources and philosophical traditions. Interest in liberating the traditional arts – especially calligraphy – from their obsolete orthodoxies lead Yoshihara and others to establish the Contemporary Art Discussion Group (Gendai Bijutsu Kondan-kai), known as Genbi’, which was founded in Osaka in 1954.

<sup>22</sup> The Seventh Yomiuri Exhibition, March 1955, Tokyo.

<sup>23</sup> The Experimental Outdoor Exhibition of Modern Art to Challenge the Mid-Summer Sun, at the Ashiya Park, in July 1955, the 1<sup>st</sup> Gutai Art Exhibiton, at the Ohara Hall, Tokyo, in October 1955, the One Day Outdoor Exhibiton for Life Magazine (for the photographers Jean Renault, who had also taken photos of the First Gutai Art exhibition, and for Mr. and Mrs. William Payne, Far East correspondents for the magazine – Yamamoto, 2003, 195), in April 1956, The Shinko Shimbun Independent Exhibition with a Gutai Room, at the Shinko Shimbun Gallety, Kobe, in May 1956, the Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition, at the Ashiya Park, in July 1956, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, at the Ohara Hall, Tokyo, in October 1956, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, at the Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, in April 1957, the Gutai Art Using Stage, at the Sankei Hall, Osaka, in May 1957, and at the Sankei Hall Tokyo, in July 1957, the 4<sup>th</sup> Gutai Art, at the

members of the group and Yoshihara established a virtuous circle in which the fulfillment of individual artistic expectations and the sense of an adventurous collective accomplishment encouraged everyone to expand their already remarkable possibilities and intuitions (Yamamoto, 2003, p. 184)<sup>24</sup>. The dissatisfaction that the Gutai artists felt towards their former representative associations and the institutional exhibitions and venues were met by Jiro Yoshihara's well-informed broader 'dissatisfaction with the orthodox modernism' (Munroe, 1994, p. 87). The cohesion of the group increased at each venue they participated in:

the dynamism and originality of Yoshihara's apprentices was outstanding. That gave them solidarity and helped to confirm a clear sense of group consciousness – "being different from the others" [Yoshihara's words, in *Autobiography of my heart*]. Shiraga, recalling works of the group exhibited at the Genbi Exhibition said, "The paintings had a power and freshness which overwhelmed the others (...) looked 'hot', unlike anything ever seen before" (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 29).

While much of the discussion on the Gutai group experimental pursuit questions it as 'the way for a new painting', it is seemingly less ultimate to view their exploration of 'concreteness' as a means for the erasure of 'content', and their engagement in bodily action as an enactment of the creative process, envisaging the reappropriation of a core potency – addressed and issued in different ways by the different Gutai members, but immediately grasped and upheld by their mentor. In art, Yoshihara expected to find 'something of the order of creation', that he could immediately recognize, regardless of its guise, an explanation he provides while commenting on calligraphy and American abstract

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Ohara Hall, Tokyo, in October 1957, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Using the Stage, at the Asahi Hall, Osaka, in April 1958.

<sup>24</sup> Shiraga, for example, was already painting with his fingers, fingernails and hands, weakening the hierarchy of the composition, when he saw his friend Murakami work *Throwing Ball Painting* and, returning to his studio, made his first work painting with the feet.



expressionism, as it were, an aspect of what he had previously called 'psychic automatism':

What got me then was less the interest of these works as calligraphy, but the fact of discovering something, let's say, of the order of creation, of the way of painting that we are looking for, of the order of what the artists try to find, and which makes them suffer (...) That is what I realized at a glance, when I had these works before my eyes (Junji, 1999, p. 171)<sup>25</sup>.

Predictably, the artistic stance he extolled would be easily overlooked through a conventional approach:

During the exhibition, critics frequently remarked that Gutai's works had "no content". "There is nothing" and "It is empty" – how delightful these words sounded to my ear! Art critics seem to have the habit of discussing the content of art works, and thus declare that content is lacking when they cannot find anything to say. In other words, they do not concern themselves with the content of emptiness. It is in "emptiness", however, that we find new possibilities and new issues which entirely disregard the status quo. Can't they see the myriad suggestions and revelations arising from "emptiness"?... (Munroe, 1994, p. 373)<sup>26</sup>

Tsuruko Yamazaki's words following the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, in Tokyo in 1956, are striking: the artist addresses the question of content and asserts what

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<sup>25</sup> 'Or, on sait que Yoshihara Jiro s'intéressait non seulement au dessin décoratif, mais à tous les aspects de l'art japonais traditionnel. Ainsi, il décrit sa rencontre avec les oeuvres du moine zen Nantenbo (1839-1925) en ces termes: 'J'ai été vivement surpris et aussitôt conquis par ces calligraphies grandioses, cernées des éclaboussures noires, jaillies du pinceau! Ce qui m'a saisi alors, c'était moins l'intérêt de ces oeuvres en tant que calligraphies, que le fait d'y découvrir quelque chose, disons, de l'ordre de la création, de la forme de peinture que nous cherchons, de l'ordre de ce que les artistes tentent de trouver, et qui les fait souffrir (...) qu'on l'exprime au moyen de signes écrits ou de la peinture revient au même, ça ne change rien au fond (...) C'est ce que j'ai réalisé d'un seul coup, quand j'ai eu ces oeuvres sous les yeux.' Puis Yoshihara dit avoir été frappé par les similitudes qu'il a découvertes entre ces oeuvres, japonaises par excellence, et les recherches les plus avant-gardistes de l'époque: 'Il existe des points communs un charme de même nature entre la beauté fluide des traces d'encre de Chine de Franz Kline, les giclées de lacque de Pollock et les éclaboussures du pinceau de Sengai'. Il faut noter que la formation de Gutai découle de cette découverte. Gutai est effectivement parti de l'intégration et de la reconnaissance simultanées, par Yoshihara Jiro, de la calligraphie d'avant-garde, alors en plein essor au Japon, et l'expressionnisme abstrait, qui avait déjà conquis le monde entier'. Atsuo Yamamoto (Yamamoto, 2003, p. 193) explains further the subject of calligraphy in Gutai, following the discussion between Shiryu Morita and Jiro Yoshihara published in the 14th issue of the calligraphy magazine *Bokubi*, in July 1952: 'Although Yoshihara repeatedly mentions the formative potential of calligraphy, he indicates that it is limited and restricted by "the sense of literary meaning". On the other hand, for the calligraphers to abandon the "sense of the letter", would mean the loss of calligraphy's identity and result on the merging with painting'.

<sup>26</sup> Originally published as Tokyo no Gutai-jin, in the journal *Gutai*, 11 July 1956, 4, p. 32.

can be described as the enactment of a creative potency with ease and familiarity, revealing of the support and the mutual recognition that defined Gutai, since its leadership would 'display their works in spite of disinterest and derision' (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 21)<sup>27</sup>. At the same time, her stress on an openness to the work itself points to the primacy of practice over theory, allowing for the creative process to derive from sources other than the intellect, as advocated by Shozo Shimamoto:

Not only in fine art education but all kinds of education, it's not possible for art theory to precede art itself. If it were so, then there wouldn't be any reason for art to exist (Munroe, 1994, p. 87)<sup>28</sup>.

Jiro Yoshihara's eagerness for a new aesthetics was objectively expressed in Gutai's search for novelty in artistic creation, and he used his comprehensive knowledge in art to reject creations that might resemble or repeat work already done. From the premises enunciated in the first issue of the Gutai journal and later complemented with the Gutai Art Manifest, it is clear that the scope of Yoshihara's guidance toward novelty is set within the international context of Gutai's contemporaneity, namely the avant-garde. At the same time, while the references he uses in the Manifest concern painting and the work of painters<sup>29</sup>, he nonetheless substantiates Gutai's research upon inventive approaches to the process of making, regarding mainly the materials and techniques, and accepting objects (such as, in the case, Atsuko Tanaka's bent iron plate, or Tsuruko

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<sup>27</sup> In October 1955, the 1<sup>st</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition was held at the Ohara Hall in Tokyo, which the critics answered with total silence, 'not a malicious reaction, rather it was caused by the fact that the works shown by the artists of Gutai went absolutely beyond the artistic norms of the day' (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 20). The 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition was held at the Ohara Hall, in October 1956.

<sup>28</sup> Shozo Shimamoto, 1956, cf. Koichi Kawasaki.

<sup>29</sup> In: Gutai Art Manifest, Geijutsu Shincho, December 1956, Yoshihara explains how primitive art and art created after Impressionism 'belong to the world of the past', and how he is unclear and with doubts about the American abstract expressionism and the French informal, wrapping them up as abstract art and as a 'centripetal approach' to the 'true properties of the material in pursuit of possibility', in opposition to the centrifugal approach of Gutai, 'that would go beyond the borders of abstract art' (Shoichi, 2004, pp. 84-86).

Yamazaki's cubic red suspended piece (fig. 1 and 2) as 'constant messages about the materials'. However indeterminate or scant, however open to the 'full use of the creativity' (Shoichi, 2004, pp. 84-86)<sup>30</sup> Yoshihara's 'theory of matter' (Kato, 2004, p. 54) was, it is possible to observe, with hindsight, that the unfolding of the early experimental episode bore a magnitude that must have surpassed his expectations, with the opening of 'many avenues' that would stride the group away from painting, their departure framework (Shinichiro, 1999, p. 25)<sup>31</sup>. Championing his challenge with staunch responses to his criticism and difficult approval, the early Gutai artists exceeded themselves by their own merit and resourcefulness but also aiming at his support and appraisal. The matter of fact is that Jiro Yoshihara had to come to terms not only with his own artistic work (Yamamoto, 2003, pp. 172-173)<sup>32</sup>, but also with the imposing authenticity, sheer simplicity, contagious vitality and altogether enigmatic purposefulness of the work of some of the early Gutai artists, namely Atsuko Tanaka or Akira Kanayama, but also Saburo Murakami, Sadamasa Motonaga, Kazuo Shiraga, Tsuruko Yamazaki, or Shozo Shimamoto. And, while generally 'refuting the intellectualization of art' (Munroe, 1994, p. 83), his critical discourse was notoriously more articulated when approaching issues of process concerning time and space from a pictorial comparative standpoint, and much less when looking into objects, especially if they bore figurative allusions. In reality, his acceptance of the latter proved that he acted according to his own theory, in a

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<sup>30</sup> In: Gutai Art Manifest, Geijutsu Shincho, December 1956.

<sup>31</sup> 'Shimamoto recalls that when commencing the Painting Period [following the experimental years], Yoshihara told the group: "We have explored many avenues so far. I think it is now time for us to set forth on an exploration of painting"'.

<sup>32</sup> In 1958, Sadamasa Motonaga, Kazuo Shiraga and Saburo Murakami, experienced Jiro Yoshihara's three months creative impasse with his own painting. Motonaga wrote: 'At the time he was working with calligraphy but he could not make progress as usual. One day, he let it all out, saying desperately: "I am taking care of you, but who will take care of me? You guys are the only mentors I can rely on." We were surprised to hear those words from such a great master. "You know what? I have to do much better than any of you." I was struck by the depth of the anguish that our leader Jiro Yoshihara was suffering from in this artist's slum'.

truly intuitive and deeply insightful openness, to acknowledge the prevalence of 'something of the order of creation', provided it maintained a candid and plain character.

In the Guitai Art Manifest, published in December 1956, Yoshihara already identifies the uniqueness of the Guitai art as going 'beyond the borders of abstract art'. Later, on the fifth issue of the Guitai Journal, in October 1956, debating in length the figurative suggestions of works by Atsuko Tanaka and by Akira Kanayama (fig. 3-4)<sup>33</sup>, Yoshihara writes:

Granted, the members can freely explore their own directions as long as they begin with an idea of non-figuration and fearlessly advance. However, it is interesting that figuration comes back in the simplest and most detached sign-like forms. Although clearly belonging to the world of figuration, they are ambitious and bold, transcending that kind of argument' (Kato, 2004, 53)<sup>34</sup>.

Furthermore, in his essay *Sur L'Art Guitai* (On Guitai Art), in April 1959, following the visit of Michel Tapié, in September 1957, and the subsequent series of joint exhibitions they organized in Japan and abroad<sup>35</sup>, Yoshihara writes:

"Guitai" is a Japanese word that means "concrete" or "materialisation". (...) We give this word the sense of grasping visually and directly the inner aspirations to matter of today's man. Spirit, liberated from the norm which until now the artists could not free themselves of, has

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<sup>33</sup> The works, Atsuko Tanaka's *Stage Clothes*, and Akira Kanayama's hundred-metre strip of white vinyl marked with black footsteps, were presented at the Outdoor Guitai Art Exhibition, in July 1956.

<sup>34</sup> I used the translation presented in this publication, instead of the one originally published in *Guitai Journal*, 5, p. 3, which states: 'These two works are quite unusual for "Guitai" artists who have denied the natural shape. But it is very interesting that these artists have treated the shape with the simplest and 'dry' ciphers. Undoubtedly it is the shape that appeal to us, but beyond that dispute these works are ambitious and daring, and quite successful under peculiar conditions of the outdoor exhibitions'.

<sup>35</sup> The International Contemporary Art Exhibition of the World (Informel: Genèse d'une Art Autre), Bridgestone Museum of Art, Tokyo, October 1957; The International Contemporary Art Exhibition, in Osaka; The International Art of a New Era: Informel and Guitai, Takashimaya Department Store, April 1958; International Exhibition of Informel artists from Europe, the U. S. and Japan, Nagasaki, Hiroshima, Tokyo, Kyoto, April 1958; The Guitai Group Exhibition, Martha Jackson Gallery, New York, September 1958, which toured in several places in the U. S. under the name of The 6<sup>th</sup> Guitai Art Exhibition.

tried to bring out in a concrete way that which shapes itself through chaos<sup>36</sup>.

This 'act of restitution' (Tiampo, 2003, p. 99)<sup>37</sup> of the initial premises of Gutai aimed at reinstating the process of experimental research as the distinctive approach of the group in 'solving some of the most central problems in the Western art of their generation', within 'the jurisdiction of the avant-garde narrative' (Tiampo, 2003, p. 110). In fact, the emphasis on process, or in the making of art, was so strong at the initial stage of the Gutai group work that, after the Experimental Outdoor Exhibition of Modern Art to Challenge the Midsummer Burning Sun closed, the artists decided 'simply to build a bonfire and burn all their works because they had no storage facilities' (Munroe, 1994, p. 90). Nevertheless, after Michel Tapié's visit, the young Gutai artists substituted the impermanent, frail materials they used by more permanent ones, in order to move the works around and abroad (Shoichi, 2000, p. 152).

Before taking part in the group, many of the future Gutai artists were already experimenting within the process of making, undoing pictorial premises such as the 'hierarchy of composition' (in the case of Kazuo Shiraga). The work under Yoshihara's tutorship provided the conditions for an extensive research into the creative accomplishment that brought out the best of their abilities.

Tanaka described the influence that Yoshihara had on her creative process:

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<sup>36</sup> *Notizie: Arti Figurative* 2, issue 8, April 1959, Turin, p. 6: "'Gutai' est un mot japonais qui signifie 'concret' ou 'matérialisation'. (...) Nous prétions alors à ce mot le sens d'essayer de saisir visuellement et directement les aspirations intérieures des hommes actuels par la matière. C'est que l'esprit, libéré de la norme à laquelle les artistes ne pouvaient pas s'échapper jusqu'à présent, a cherché de dégager d'une manière concrète ce qui se forme à travers le chaos."

<sup>37</sup> Yoshihara's essay, "Sur l'art Gutai," addressed the misunderstandings that took place in New York, writing that 'Gutai art now has the tendency of being taken for Action Painting or a Neo-Dada, or even as a mixture of these two movements.' In an act of restitution, Yoshihara described the Gutai's philosophical stance with respect to matter, and introduced some of the most successful experimental works from the outdoor exhibitions and *Gutai Art on Stage* through narrative description and photographs'.

Our leader, Yoshihara Jiro used his own special method to encourage our creativity and attitude to the highest level. Our creations were instigated by Yoshihara's exhibition proposals such as the Outdoor Exhibitions, Gutai Art on Stage, and even the indoor exhibitions. By doing exhibitions where we had never thought of doing them, I believe we were able to have very precious experiences that we had never anticipated, and we were able to make a great impact on Art. During that time, when I was trying to create new works, I often felt strangely resistant to instantly accepting proposals. Once I had made the works, however, they presented problems that changed my perspective and helped me to grow (Tiampo, 2004, p. 196)<sup>38</sup>.

Shozo Shimamoto further explains the Gutai artists' understanding of experimentation:

I have explained that experimentation is necessary in avant-garde painting, but there are two kinds of vanguard experimentation: beauty that is either received without resistance or utterly resisted. Come to think of it, it is absurd to say that something is new and at the same time accepted as beautiful in the viewer's mind. Consider Heisenberg's theory of uncertainty – that the concepts of 'new' and 'beautiful' are forever chasing each other. That is to say, since newness in art invariably awakens a new sensibility in the viewer, it is impossible for it to be accepted without resistance. If something is at once new and beautiful, that in and of itself constitutes a logical contradiction (Tiampo, 2004, p. 109)<sup>39</sup>.

It is not difficult to collect statements issued by Gutai artists that bind 'novelty' and 'beauty', and further hint into what Yoshihara called 'something in the order of creation'. According to Saburo Murakami,

When one rejects the existing sense of beauty which yearns for certainties, and grasps evasive qualities and boldly chooses danger, will not possibilities open up for the discovery of a new facet of beauty? (Love, 1993, p. 362);

or Akira Kanayama,

When ideas of painting and sculpture are expanded to the extent that they reveal an unknown dimension, immutable meaning is revealed in anticipation of a new era (Tiampo, 2004, p. 106)<sup>40</sup>;

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<sup>38</sup> Search for an Unknown Aesthetic, *Geijutsu Shincho*, January 1960, 11, pp. 271-2.

<sup>39</sup> Can a piece of Fabric be a Work of Art?, 1956.

<sup>40</sup> About the bell work, 1956.

or Atsuko Tanaka,

A work of art that is newly created must express a beauty that is new and distinct from that of existing works. To duplicate pre-existing beauty is artisan's work, it is a work of handicraft. An artist's responsibility is to discover an unknown beauty and realize it as her work (Tiampo, 2004, p. 102)<sup>41</sup>.

### THE BODY WITHIN THE CONTINUUM OF MATTER

The definite shift into process occurred when Jiro Yoshihara, in June 1955, watching the rejected works for the Ashiya City Art Exhibition being carried outside, had the idea of exhibiting outdoors (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 31)<sup>42</sup>. The announcement of the exhibition that Yoshihara published on the Yamiuri Shinbun, 7th July 55, read:

The experiment consists of getting directly into contact with nature, and in exposing the exhibits to the natural forces of sun, wind and rain' (Bertozzi, 1991, p. 20),

and the exhibition took place in the Ashiya pine grove, by the banks of the river. This prompted the artists into a creative surge that is translated in the title of the exhibition, coming across its descriptive literalness – Experimental Outdoor Exhibition of Modern Art To Challenge the Midsummer Burning Sun, since their works were to be equalled to the works of nature, their creative drive to the creative potency of nature itself, powerfully represented by none other than the Sun, the archaic symbol of consciousness and, for that matter, the driving force of life and creation. While this straightforward archaic layer of knowledge may have remained unconscious, to be taken poetically,

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<sup>41</sup> Search for an Unknown Aesthetic, 1960.

<sup>42</sup> Yamamoto also hints at the possibility that Yoshihara knew of a local precedent in showing works of art on the open air, in 1922 and 1924, when Ichiro Fukui exhibited his works at the Ashiya beach, hanging elegantly from the branches of the pine trees.

the cultural respect for the innate quality of being that all things in the inanimate world embody, which was reflected in Gutai's attitude towards the nature of material (Munroe, 1994, p. 84),

overflowed through every boundary still remaining between body and environment, art and life, to instill the relationship between all kinds of matter. The Gutai artists, who would 'always bring the material into contact with the human body' (Bertozzi, 1991, p. 77)<sup>43</sup>,

understood instinctively that it was meaningless to just bring the same kind of paintings or sculptures which they would show at an indoor exhibition. It would seem that their concern was to give a power to the work that would not be overwhelmed by the exhibiting space (...) acknowledge the space and let natural phenomena such as wind or light into their work (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 32).

It suffices to hear the impression that this confrontation caused in Fujiko

Shiraga:

When I brought the finished work to the exhibition site, I was shocked and dumbfounded, feeling as if I had been hit on the head so hard that I almost fainted. How insignificant my work appeared. How obviously intentional it appeared to be. It radiated power that was neither limitless nor massive (Tiampo, 2003, p. 120)<sup>44</sup>.

The powerfully physical and, indeed, physiological report given by Fujiko Shiraga is a clue to the heady task the Gutai group was about to perform, as well as to the level of bodily engagement it encompassed, a factor of the greatest relevance for the authenticity, vitality and purposefulness of their creative accomplishment.

Iconographic sparseness, intrinsic to the creative aspirations of the Gutai group, and a fundament shared by all – as an effective strategy to divert content as well as an objective parameter of assessment – implies the surpassing of

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<sup>43</sup> Shinichiro cf. Bertozzi.

<sup>44</sup> Gutai yagai ten sengo no watashi, About myself before and after the outdoor exhibition, *Gutai* 3, 1955, p. 23.



mental associations that resolve as meaning. At this stage, the emerging physicality of the Gutai artists (Kazuo was already painting with his feet and Saburo Murakami by throwing an inked ball) was, seemingly, a bodily activation that instinctively responded to this detour from the educated workings of the mind and, thus, from the trained conditionings of the body. Jiro Yoshihara's intuitive resolution of exhibiting outdoors, on a public space, confronting the scale of an almost natural environment, under a scorching temperature and blinding light during the day, and on the dark during the night, was a catalytic pull that went well beyond the impact of the dynamic physical inputs of scale, light, temperature, humidity, and wind. Firstly, the power, and indeed life, residing within natural matter candidly confronted the purposefulness of plastic materials and, even more, of plastic formulation. Secondly, the transience of the natural processes, of which matter is altogether the support, result and agent that give evidence of a perpetual and, in itself, purposeful creative force, brought forward the integrity of creation. This integrity was substantiated in the continuum between artist, creative process and work of art, while the separation of life from art appeared devoid of any sense. Finally, the compelling circumstances of the exhibition arose an unequivocal celebratory awareness that accorded with the Japanese tradition of the kami rites (Munroe, 1994, p. 97)<sup>45</sup> and its empirical conception of the transpersonal experience, in which "“religion” and “faith” had little to do with’ (Breen, 2010, p. 5). Predictably, a full appropriation of these intuitions into a steady stance would only occur later, with the 1<sup>st</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, at the Ohara Hall, Tokyo, in October 1955,

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<sup>45</sup> 'But the source of Gutai's interest in the interplay of body, material, time, and space also included traditions outside the Euro-American avant garde, such as the Japanese festival (matsuri), farce, and comic folk theatre. With its wild antics and freak events, Gutai performance manifested a long enthusiasm in Japan for the hybrid and fringe presented in the form of popular entertainment'.

culminating in the following Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition, again at the Ashiya Park, in July 1956:

it is a mistake to believe that these artists set out from the start with the purpose in mind of dismantling conventional painting styles. (...) These works were spontaneous statements which resulted from the special context of a pine grove and the scorching sun (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 20).

In the Challenge to the Midsummer Burning Sun only half of the 40 participants were Gutai members (Shoichi, 2004, pp. 43-44)<sup>46</sup>, and the most experimentally notorious works were presented by artists who had already shifted into 'physicality': Kazuo Shiraga presented a conical structure of red wood logs and placed himself inside of it, hacking at the logs with an hatchet (fig. 19); Saburo Murakami ran across asphalt roofing material spread on the ground leaving the damage as the trace of his action; he would state that

Creation is meaningless unless its undertaking is based on the fundamental freedom of human beings. Creation originated in an absolute bare essence is unpredictable. (...) The ultimate goal of our work is to stir the human senses and consciousness (Munroe, 1994, pp. 371-372)<sup>47</sup>.

Other works by Gutai artists, while not actions in themselves, demanded the full presence of the body and even the dislocation of the viewer for a complete apprehension: Jiro Yoshihara presented several vertical structures with light lamps, Atsuko Tanaka spread a 10 square meter pink cloth 30 centimeters above the ground (fig. 5), Akira Kanayama presented a small red ball placed at the centre of a wide square grid (fig. 6), Tsuruko Yamazaki linked tin plates in a chain pattern and attached the chain to trees (fig. 7), Sadamasa Motonaga filled

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<sup>46</sup> '... of the 40-some people who showed in the exhibition, more than half were Gutai members, effectively making it the first Gutai exhibition. (...) the outdoor exhibition provided Ukita Yozo, Shiraga Fujiko and Motonaga Sadamasa with an opportunity to join Gutai, creating the core of the group in its transition to the middle period'.

<sup>47</sup> Originally published in the Gutai Journal, October 1955, 2, p. 23.

plastic bags with water of various colours and hang them on the branches of the trees (fig. 8), and Fujiko Shiraga inclined a 10 metres long board irregularly split in two (fig. 9). She would further comment:

I was determined to express, as a human being, an immense force – a force so great that would defy any human control (Munroe, 1994, p. 372)<sup>48</sup>.

The engagement of the body in the creative process was thereafter an explicit motivation of most of the Gutai members, while plastic figuration lost its relevance as autonomous creation:

The Gutai action events – short, single, and fast matches between body and matter – signify a concrete manifestation of human imagination, chance, and time. The action, often staged in public, was intended both to present (in itself) and produce (as a result) a work of art. (...) These action events, including many plans that were unrealized, were designed to invent new ways to make art using the whole body (Munroe, 1994, p. 91).

Three months after the Challenge to the Midsummer Burning Sun, the 1<sup>st</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, occupying two floors of the Ohara Hall, presented the consolidation of previous experiences. Each artist presented several works and some of the artists showed work that proved to be seminal: Kazuo Shiraga showed paintings done with the feet, and performed his Challenge to the Mud on the roof top of the building (fig. 10); Saburo Murakami presented different structures of frames with several layers of screens of paper bearing holes that resulted from his action of passing through them and (figs. 11-14), in the opening of the exhibition, he invited Jiro Yoshihara to tear the paper that covered the entrance to an area of the exhibition (figs. 11-14); Atsuko Tanaka covered a 30 meters wall with juxtaposed pieces of fabric (fig. 15), suspended a pink fabric close to a window, and installed her piece of electric ringing bells;

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<sup>48</sup> Originally published in the Gutai Journal, October 1955, 3, p. 23.

Akira Kanayama presented and lighted a giant white inflatable balloon (fig. 15); Tsuruko Yamazaki presented a piece with several mirrors arranged in different angles; Sadamasa Motonaga presented vinyl bags with coloured water and stones (fig. 16-17); and Shozo Shimamoto presented a piece with faulty steps to walk on (fig. 18). In the Gutai Journal issued immediately after the exhibition, Kazuo Shiraga writes: 'My creative works are in no need of any permanent resolution; action is the whole venture' (Yamamoto, 2003, p. 188)<sup>49</sup>. Nevertheless, it is relevant to add that the Gutai members, at this stage, while aware of their emphasis on the engagement of the body, did not conceive of their actions as a separate part of the work or, at least, as a separate part of their shows, as autonomous events. Even with the previous experience with Challenge to the Midsummer Burning Sun, that had been thoroughly photographed, the fact is that during the 1<sup>st</sup> Gutai Exhibition 'the artists had to set up everything for a performance every time there was an interview' (Yamamoto, 2003, p. 160). Perhaps the empirical understanding, by the artists, of the actions of the creative process as autonomous events tending towards performance, occurred later in April 1956, with the request by the American Life magazine correspondents in Japan to view the work of the Gutai group. Knowing of the importance that the magazine had had in showing the work of Jackson Pollock (Tiampo, 2003, p. 115)<sup>50</sup>, and certainly familiar with the empathic power of documentary images<sup>51</sup>, Yoshihara organized the One Day Only Outdoor Exhibition (Ruins Exhibition), held at a bombed industrial site by the mouth of the river Mukogawa, Amasagaki, for the magazine photographers Jean Launois and William Payne.

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<sup>49</sup> Originally published in the Gutai Journal, October 1955, 3.

<sup>50</sup> 'Pollock appeared in *Life* magazine on 11 October 1948 and again on 8 August 1949'.

<sup>51</sup> Ming Tiampo refers this as the 'poetic ability of photography to transform an instant into an image', and states that, for Yoshihara, the images of Pollock 'provided a link between painting and theatricality, which enabled Yoshihara to bring his interest in Surrealism, abstraction and expression in painting together with his deep passion for the theater' (Tiampo, 2003, p. 116).

During that day, the artists presented their actions. Kazuo Shiraga performed with the red logs (fig. 19), painting with the feet and hung by a rope, and also riding a bicycle, Sadamasa Motonaga hung coloured water bags and operated his smoke machine (fig. 20), Saburo Murakami passed through framed screens of paper (fig. 21), and Jiro Yoshihara put red, yellow and green paint respectively on three chicken to watch them painting while moving around (fig. 22), and installed in a deposit tank, coming out of the water, timber poles of different colours, and left to float several coloured objects (fig. 22).

A further development of these experiences was reached with the Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition, in July 1956. The exhibition was again held at the Ashiya Park and comprised works such as Tsuruko Yamazaki's red suspended cubic space (fig. 1), and her three-part metal squares wall (fig. 23), Atsuko Tanaka's seven stylized figures of cloth and her cross-like light bulbs piece, Sadamasa Motonaga's vinyl stripes with coloured water (fig. 24), his smoke machine (fig. 24), and his fire candles in the water (fig. 24), Saburo Murakami's rocket-like hut (fig. 25), as well as his empty suspended frame (fig. 25), Shozo Shimamoto's faulty-step piece to walk on (fig. 26), and his paintings done with canon (fig. 26), Akira Kanayama's stripe with footprints, among other pieces, with 'numerous works designed to be participatory and the light-art works created for display during the night especially noteworthy' (Shoichi, 2004, p. 44). The 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, again at the Ohara Hall in Tokyo, in October 1956, preceded the publication of the Gutai Art Manifest by Jiro Yoshihara, since he was, by then, assured of the accomplishments of the group and, thus, prepared to further outline its program. At this exhibition, having learned from the previous experiences, the group 'set a date for public performances so that they could show their works efficiently to the media' (Yamamoto, 1993, p. 160), presenting

Kazuo Shiraga painting with the feet (fig. 27), Saburo Murakami tearing the framed paper (fig. 28), Shozo Shimamoto painting by throwing bottles (fig. 29), or Akira Kanayama inflating a dotted floor balloon (fig. 30), among several other actions. Some of the works in display were the result of the actions presented, others were adaptations from the previous Outdoor Exhibition, such as Akira Kanayama stripe of footsteps, while others carried on the specific research of each artist, such as Atsuko Tanaka's dress made with lamps. On the following edition, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, that took place at the Kyoto Municipal Museum of Art, the artists showed works that carried on the quest into matter itself, such as Tsuruko Yamazaki's aluminum swollen surfaces (fig. 31), or Akira Kanayama's paintings done with a drawing robot (fig. 32), while Atsuko Tanaka showed adaptations of her body shaped cloth works, as well as the cross like bulbs work that she had presented at the latest outdoor exhibition, along with the dress made of lamps and numerous drawings of its circuitry plans (fig. 33). By then, it was obvious that the Gutai group was at ease with the procedures of the creative process, regarding it as an implicit part of the result, hence showing work that was produced to progress in a project or statement. Meanwhile they were gaining momentum on what concerned the action itself:

Public performance literally means revealing the creative process, which is supposed to be extremely private, to an audience. Unlike in a closed studio, there is a tense atmosphere between those watching and those being watched. By sharing this moment of tension with unfamiliar people, the members came to think that their processes of production, in other words their actions themselves, had a certain significance (Yamamoto, 1993, p. 160).

## EMBODYING THE CREATIVE POTENCY

In this respect, the resolution to present their artwork at a theatre hall, on the Gutai Art Using the Stage in May 1957, was a predictable development within the organic progress the group was pursuing. Jiro Yoshihara explains that the idea came to his mind during the Outdoor Exhibition, with the Gutai artists using 'the great out of doors as the stage with the huge space of the limitless dome of the blue sky above'<sup>52</sup> and, later, with hindsight, in his essay *Ten Years of the Gutai Group* he confirms: 'After all of the unimaginable things that happened in the outdoor exhibitions, it seemed very natural to start using the stage next' (Shoichi, 2004, p. 70). Sure enough, *Gutai Art Using the Stage* was a pretext to move forward on the research into the possibilities of time and space, light and colour, presence and movement, and towards a further aesthetization of the creative process, by then a motivation unmistakably embraced by the group (Shoichi, 2004, p. 70)<sup>53</sup>. Jiro Yoshihara's 'extraordinary intuition'<sup>54</sup> can be explained partly by his determination in 'forming artistic ties with every artistic genre' (Shoichi, 2004, pp. 84–86)<sup>55</sup>, in consonance with the traditional Japanese cultural conception of the intrinsic merging of all arts (Tiampo, 2003, p. 123)<sup>56</sup>, but also by his 'deep passion for the theater' (Tiampo,

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<sup>52</sup> Jiro Yoshihara, in *Gutai Art on the Stage*, Gutai Journal, July 1957, 7.

<sup>53</sup> 'Among these works there are works (...) that seem as if they only show their own ordinary process of creation. They, however, never mean to show the audience the process of their creation but have been presented in the form that should be seen on the stage'.

<sup>54</sup> Expression used by Michel Tapié, and adopted by Alfred Pacquement, in the title *Gutai: l'extraordinaire intuition*, which named his contribution for the catalogue of the exhibition *Le Japon des Avant-Gardes*, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1989.

<sup>55</sup> Originally published in *Geijutsu Shincho*, December 1956. I used the translation on Hirai Soichi *What's Gutai*, 2004.

<sup>56</sup> 'In Japan, the taxonomy of the arts – the separation of painting, sculpture, drawing, craft, theater, and ritual – was imported in the 1870s along with the very concepts of art and aesthetics. (...) At the time, the Meiji government, threatened by the colonial presence of the West looming in neighboring countries, embarked on a campaign of *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment) that translated and adopted philosophical and scientific concepts from Europe. These new aesthetic categories did not, however, fit seamlessly into the aesthetic system that

2003, p. 116), despite clarifying that the presentations made at the Gutai Art Using the Stage 'did not belong to any category of the traditional stage art':

Have stage sets not been regarded as art up to now? Of course, within the theatre art was acknowledged as having an important function, but still it was thought to be its lot to play a minor role. Now, with this project, the members of Gutai want to raise stage art to the position of an autonomous form of art. Releasing themselves from the conventional notion of art, they have entered the special territory of the theatre to accept the challenge of its functions, i. e., of music, light and time<sup>57</sup>.

By then, Yoshihara and the Gutai members would have realized that the enactment of the creative process had a driving attribute directly dependent on the physical presence of the artist or, in any case, of the artist's actual creative command or influence, a pathos that was raw and direct, contagious, 'something of the order of creation' that was vivid and inescapable under that guise, 'making the body a primary signifying material' (Munroe, 1994, p. 92). Furthermore, since the creative process consisted objectively of a ludic relationship with the material, never concerned with meaning – Gutai's avant-garde claim par excellence, the resulting iconography substantiated a very primal bond between artist, matter and creative drive, thus 'reenacting the aggressive freedom of birth itself' (Munroe, 1994, p. 84). The 12 presentations of *The Gutai Art Using the Stage* and the 11 presentation of the second edition, *The 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Using the Stage*, in April 1958, established Gutai performance as 'an explosive rite' (Munroe, 1994, p. 84): separate events that were intuitively created, carefully prepared, yet impossible to rehearse, since a relevant part of their internal

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already existed in Japan. Not just words, these concepts were built upon a Western philosophical tradition defined on one end by Plato's Idea, and on the other by the Absolute Spirit in Hegel. Superimposed upon Japanese hermeneutics, in which there was no notion of Art separated from Life, these concepts were translated with the awkwardness (...) Caught between the royal robes of European aesthetic taxonomy and the skin of Japanese aesthetic unity, the Gutai were able to use the perspective gleaned from each to make works that confronted the limitations of both'.

<sup>57</sup> Jiro Yoshihara in *Gutai Art on the Stage*, Gutai Journal, July 1957, 7.



coherence was the building of a sense of tension before an audience, which by itself amounted to collective engagement, if not collective validation. They were events of their own kind that could not, by then, fit into any existent category. Although in 1965 Allan Kaprow presented the action work of the Gutai group in his pioneer book *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings*, he failed to understand it: Kaprow rightly stated that they had been likely the first artists to present multidisciplinary performances after John Cage's *Black Mountain* in 1952, but wrongly defined their work as the first performances of the type 'happening'<sup>58</sup>.

#### At The Gutai Art Using the Stage, the

majority of the presentations brought to the stage concepts that had been used at the outdoors exhibitions and at the Gutai Art Exhibitions (Shoichi, 2004, pp. 70-71),

such as Saburo Murakami's paper tearing, Atsuko Tanaka's electric cloths, Akira Kanayama's inflatable balloons or Sadamasa Motonaga's smoke rings machine, but 'planned in a far more meticulous manner than before' (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 22). Since the development of those concepts unfolded 'on an edge belonging neither solely to art, cinema, music or theatre, the result was an extraordinary sense of tension' (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 41), the works charged with an 'extreme vitality' (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 41):

these works [that] amounted to the vandalism of the performing arts, and for which there was not even time for true rehearsals, demonstrated such thoroughgoing aspects as one-shot and on-the-

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<sup>58</sup> As Osaki Shinichiro remarks (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 21), the stage work of the Gutai group does not observe any of the seven features that Kaprow establishes as defining 'happening': a fluid line between art and life, references alien to art, shifting sites, variable time, performed only once, no audience, collage of events in shifting times and sites. 'The Happening produced by Kaprow himself was presented at the Reuben Gallery, New York in 1957, two years after the first exhibition of Gutai (...) The Actions of Gutai which were created almost intuitively do not primarily lend themselves to the application of such a theoretical approach. I think, rather, we can define the character of the Gutai Actions through studying the difference between them'.

spot presentation as has always typified the activities of Gutai (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 22).

On stage, Kazuo Shiraga opened with the Sanbaso-Super Modern: more than 30 red bamboo sticks leaning at even spaces along three white panels fall one by one in a quick sequence, then through the space at the centre, Shiraga appeared in a red outfit of huge arms, with a huge nose and high conical hat, moving his flexible bamboosed arms (fig. 34). He undressed to show a black suit and, along with 6 other people, shot green arrows against the white panels while the others shot everywhere (fig. 34). The performance ended with Shiraga alone throwing the red sticks around. Kanayama inflated a balloon that was on the floor, and which was then painted on stage by an automatic machine (fig. 35), and briefly shown, before several people cut into its inside and light it with a red light (fig. 35). Murakami presented a framed kraft paper screen that he touched with his hands from one side to the other, walking along the stage, and then pierced and tore it with his whole body (fig. 36); after a short pause, he then hit the paper and the frame with a stick. Tanaka prepared a setting with a giant red dress as backdrop, and showed up on the stage with a green dress. She swiftly removed parts of the dress that revealed different colours and shapes, until she striped into a black bodysuit (fig. 37). Several dresses with electric bulbs moved across the stage and, finally, a big cross with light bulbs blinking entered on scene. Motonaga presented four machines that made smoke rings to hover through the coloured lights across the stage and the auditorium (fig. 38), eventually ending the Stage Performance when the audience had to leave the smoke filled room. At The 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Using the Stage, Shiraga performed with two giant fans (fig. 39), Tanaka set on the stage three huge circles bearing smaller different coloured circles that blinked while she performed again with clothes (fig. 40). Motonaga

used a machine to inflate a huge plastic tube that would release smoke from small holes along its surface. Kanayama presented several different shaped balloons (fig. 41).

The results accomplished with these two presentations on the stage became paradigmatic and would prove unsurpassable: despite

several suggestions for experimental happenings, such as the production of on-stage exhibitions, these were set aside since none of the ideas surpassed their earlier events (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 23).

Therefore, when the Gutai group was invited to perform at the Osaka World Exhibition in 1970, and presented the Gutai Art Festival, many elements of the two Gutai Art Using the Stage were retrieved. Nevertheless, although according to the artists

the Gutai Art Festival (...) was something quite marvellous as a performance, (...) regrettably it must be said that the sense of tension which was once part of the stage exhibitions was scarcely in evidence (Yamamoto, 1994, p. 41).

While it is undeniable that the outdoor exhibitions gave precedence to the 'imago of the matsuri' (Tiampo, 2003, p. 170)<sup>59</sup>, a festival that is a part in the whole of the Kami celebrations, the stage exhibitions gave further evidence of an all-encompassing homology between the work of the Gutai artists and those manifestations, unravelling the core coherence behind the coincidences and correspondences that they manifest. The stage performances, with their carefully planned yet non-rehearsable character, upheld by the pathos of its actual manifestation that dispensed with the thread of narrative, seemingly actualize 'a

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<sup>59</sup> 'It is here that the imago of *matsuri* became significant. Beyond the generalized ambiance of heightened creativity produced through group activity within a specific and sacralized time and space, one can point to a matrix of conceptual categories adapted from *matsuri*, as well as an iconography of forms and actions. That these exhibitions took place outdoors, and that they incorporated a high degree of performance which was often violent in nature, is highly significant'.

new order of creation': they present 'exemplary' actions, pertaining to the category of actions that are transmitted in an 'original', 'creative', 'primordial' time; thus, they re-enact the creative command which, at the same time, accomplishes the creative potency and is equated to the first creative act, the cosmogony. The Guitai stage performances provide a link into the generative role that the kami celebrations had in the artistic tradition of the Japanese culture, placing the whole of the Guitai art on that genealogy of 'radical creation'. As we shall see, the kami celebrations, with their aestheticized pathos and their cryptic mythical narratives, were the ground where dance, poetry, music and performance evolved, establishing 'new orders of creation' through the re-enactment of the creative command.

The Guitai work of the early experimental period swiftly evolved to events that, like the Kami celebrations, envisaged the ultimate purpose of cumulatively enacting the original creation, the creative command, and the creative potency, in great, exuberant moments of regeneration and unification. Sharing this primordial feature, events akin to the Kami celebrations have been continuously present worldwide under the guise of popular folklore, bearing prehistoric or aboriginal precedents<sup>60</sup> and a tenor that is popular, collective and, thus, eminently self-organized and self-determined, naturally counterposing the establishment – in fact, balancing it. With its strictly experimental character, this type of events represents a deeply rooted and spontaneous tendency toward the concrete that eludes the institutional eagerness in seizing and conceptualizing it. These celebrations have a mythological character in the sense that they are not allegories of objective occurrences, even if more superficial

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<sup>60</sup> Aboriginal is here used with the sense of the latin term 'ab origine', into the origin, reflecting primordial psychic situations that, in more superficial layers of reference, may consist in, for instance, the story of an activity, event or historic figure primordial for the community or group that is celebrating the rite.

layers of meaning, contextually timely and historically purposeful, add information of that sort. They seem to be relentless irrepressible symbolic expressions of the inner unconscious drama of the psyche, which becomes accessible to man's consciousness by way of projection, in primordial images. Understandably, a straightforward definition of kami is that 'according to ancient usage whatever seemed strikingly impressive, possessed the quality of excellence, or inspired a feeling of awe was called kami' (Harris, 2001, p. 14), in other words, the numinous. Celebrating these intangible realities respond to an imperative need, or irresistible unconscious psychic urge, to assimilate all outer experiences to inner psychic events (Jung, 1990, p. 302). The primordial images displayed in these celebrations are empowering: they are reminders of man's creative teleology, and address those who seek to apprehend the unseen happenings of the psyche. They contain a revealed knowledge that is usually hidden, setting forth the secrets of the psyche in glorious arrangements. They give man the premonition of the divine, at the same time safeguarding him from immediate experience of it, that is, they are dams and walls to keep back the dangers of the unconscious (Jung, 1990, p. 327). All primordial images converge to an essential soteriological<sup>61</sup> operation, in which the universal underlying psychic conflict expressed by the opposition between, on one extreme, organic raw manifest instinct and, on the other, the finer virtual elaborations held beyond intellect, is provisionally resolved by a return to the primeval 'totalization', with a cancellation of the differentiated and determined condition of man. In the appearance of these primordial images, while the structuring myth bears, in its core, information about the origin of creation that inexorably connects with a mostly uncounscious knowledge in man, the mythmaking

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<sup>61</sup> Salvational.

process that ensues with the 'life' of the myth is a superposing continuous practice that occurs at all times, taking hold of that 'hallow of origin' (Breen, 2010, p. 131) to serve contextual mundane purposes. In this sense, the history of Japanese Shinto is an illustration of the attempts to assimilate the complex of kami celebrations to an agreed ideology, and its mythmaking throughout the time shows the vicissitudes of the history of Japan itself amidst struggles of power and philosophical influences, from which kami celebrations emerged, after all, as the 'endlessly variegated body of local practices' they had always been (Breen, 2010, p. 14)<sup>62</sup>.

Kami celebrations comprise three elements: a shrine, which is a site that can either be permanent, seasonal, provisional, occasional or simply punctual; a myth, which is a composite story or set of stories with superposed layers of meaning that vary according to the different contexts, yet underlain by archaic primordial imagery, archetypal imagery; and, finally, a rite, which is the figurative aspect of the celebration, conveying the myth and sometimes defining the site for the celebration, and presenting different types that often articulate with one another: divinations, rites of passage of age, marriages, funerals, blessings for different purposes, and also processions, theatre, music and poetry performances, and festivals<sup>63</sup>, which accumulate several of the previous referred modalities (Breen, 2010, p. 22).

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<sup>62</sup> 'Beneath the surface of [an] apparently simple tale there are many layers of different origins. These layers are traces of power struggles between lineages from various parts of the Yamato inner sphere' (Breen, 2010, p. 138).

<sup>63</sup> '(...) shrine festivals (matsuri) (...) are the main occasions on which the shrines really come to life. (...) The most common pattern of a festival is a parade, for which the kami is transferred from the kami hall into a palanquin called mikoshi. The mikoshi is carried or wheeled through the neighbourhood and temporarily installed at various sites where the kami is entertained with dancing, theatre performances, wrestling matches, archery contests, and the like. (...) typical of shrine festivals is that they engage large parts of the community in their proceedings, and that they envelop the community in a carnivalesque atmosphere in which much is allowed and all is forgiven' (Breen, 2010, p. 4).

According to Breen and Teeuwen, one of the most disseminated myths in the kami celebrations throughout Japan, and one of the most famous episodes of kami mythology, is the tale of the sun-goddess Amaterasu who hid in a rock-cave and thus threw the world into darkness. The resilience of this myth, in their opinion, is due to the fact that, besides prefiguring the imperial ancestor as Amaterasu, the myth

was not primarily interpreted as a political one, but rather as a metaphor for enlightenment practices, or as the origination myth of performative traditions, such as waka composition, Noh, and kami dancing (kagura) (Breen, 2010, p. 23)

in addition to being 'representative of the heady mix of sex and violence that pervades kami myth and ritual' (Breen, 2010, p. 129)<sup>64</sup>. For the purpose of this reasoning the relevant aspect is the myth as the origination of the performative traditions, in order to bring forth the primordial images underlying that complex of figurations and meanings, since those primordial images seem to coincide with the ones that emerge in the Gutai experimental practice, as we shall see.

In the tale<sup>65</sup>, Amaterasu was harrassed by her brother, Susanowo, who threw a horse into the weaving hall where she was weaving, causing the weaving maiden to pierce her genitals and die. Frightened, Amaterasu retired to a cave, plunging the world into darkness. The kami gathered to devise a plan to make Amaterasu leave the rock-cave. They charged the smith Ama-tsu-Mara with making a mirror, and then set up a tree with shining curved beads coming from its branches and put the mirror on the middle. After several procedures, Ame-no-

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<sup>64</sup> For the purpose of their research on the history of Shinto, they consider that 'an analysis of this tale and its trajectory through history will illustrate many aspects of the formation, usages, and transformations of kami myth' (Breen, 2010, p. 129).

<sup>65</sup> 'Mytho-history (fulfilled the operation) to represent the present as rooted in a divine past (...) The art of writing allowed the court to give its own narrative of origins a new form of permanency and canonized authority (...) codified in a number of works that are among the oldest surviving texts written in Japan. (...) We do not know when exactly the process of codification began, but the earliest surviving texts in this corpus, Kojiki (712) and Nihon shoki (720), clearly draw from earlier materials' (Breen, 2010, p. 28).

Uzume became kami possessed, showed her nipples and genitals and caused the other kami to laugh. Amaterasu was startled, slightly opened the door and asked why were they laughing, given the condition of misery the world was with her retreat. The kami answered that they were dancing and laughing because there was a kami superior to her, and managed to show her own reflection on the mirror. Even more startled she leaned and was drawn out, and light shone again over the sky (the 'High Plain of Heaven') and the earth (the 'Central Land of Reed Plains')<sup>66</sup>.

An analysis of the archaic content of the tale, that is, taking it as an illustration of an unconscious embodied knowledge, this tale prefigures the re-emergence of consciousness – the sun – after a voluntary confinement in the realm of the unconscious, the rock-cave, darkness or night. Amaterasu, the sun-goddess, the prefiguration of consciousness, can also be taken as psychic energy itself, libido (in the conception of Carl Gustav Jung), retroverting into the unconscious due to the harassment of instinctual pressing drives, represented by the two coloured horse thrown by Susanowo, the deity of the sea and of the storms, who also represents the disintegrating forces of the unconscious. Since this myth is foundational to the identity of Japan as a nation, which is a country of islands, the sea has a heightened importance as a representation of the threatening forces of the unconscious. One of the main aspects of the tale for the purpose of this reasoning is the dance performed by Ame-no-Uzume, a prefiguration of the trance that brings forth the aesthetic creation, the means by which that consciousness returns from her retreat to shine again on the whole of reality, in other words, aesthetic creation enabling the retrogressive libido to be re-channelled outwardly again. Another detail that is worth mentioning is the

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<sup>66</sup> See the complete version from the *Koniji* in the Annexes.



importance ascertained to the genitals. Symbolically, they are likely reminiscences of fertility rites, but can also be taken as the figuration of human creative power: the weaver maiden, frightened by the horse, accidentally pierces her genitals and dies and, during her dancing trance, Ame-no-Uzume shows her genitals, causing the empathic reaction that, as a result, brings Amaterasu back outside. Finally, in more recent integrations of the myth, in shrite rites and kagura performance, the relevant aspects are, respectively, the prefiguring of the cave as the human body itself, and the emphasis placed on the opening of the cave door.

Inserted in the larger narratives of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki*, this court tale derives from an archaic originary myth, the cosmogonic narrative that informs of the creation of the world (Harris, 2001, p. 42)<sup>67</sup>, which only much later, in its written version, includes the birth of Amaterasu to consecrate the imperial lineage. In the cosmogonic myth, Izanagi and his sister Izanami descend from heaven and have sexual intercourse. Izanami gives birth to the Japanese islands and many other deities and dies giving birth to the fire deity. Unable to

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<sup>67</sup> During the Jomon period, 'Presumably, learning was by oral tradition and memory (...) One of the reputed writers of the *Konjiki*, Yasumaro, is said to have recorded it directly from the lips of one Hieda no Are who had recited the entire epic to him from memory. Hieda no Are was no doubt one of the hereditary kataribe (reciters) of Shinto history. They are mentioned on the *Nihongi* as passing on the secrets of ritual and quasi-histories of the gods'; 'Recent advances in archeology have shown that Japan may have enjoyed the longest-known stable civilization in the world since around the end of the last Ice Age. (...) There is as yet no evidence of any form of defence associated with any settlement. Since there was minimal or no agriculture, it is probable that there was a communal lifestyle with no division of land or concept of individual ownership (...) Sculpted stone and earthenware anthropomorphic Jomon figurines are of a number of types. Many represent pregnant or amply endowed females, possibly for use in fertility or childbirth rituals; others are funerary. (...) A recurring image is the snake, and a class of human faces with a snake-like appearance suggests a form of deification of the abundant forest snakes (...) A striking feature of many figurines is that the mouth is open in a round O, as if singing, like some later haniwa figures of the Kofun period [the open mouths on the figurines can indicate song or intonation, reciting of the memorized knowledge]. Until the importation of Chinese ideographic script to Japan in the sixth century and, excepting inscriptions on some Chinese mirrors and swords, there was no writing in the Jomon culture. (...) A complete late Yayoi period agricultural village site was discovered in 1943 at Toro in Shizuoka city. (...) Pit dwellings built over oval-shaped sunken recesses were roofed directly into walls around the edges of the pits. There were also more sophisticated storehouses raised on columns and having wooden plank walls. Such storehouses were the forerunners of both early palaces and Shinto shrines' (Harris, 2001, pp. 39-43).

have her back, and while washing the ashes of death, Izanagi creates the sun-goddess Amaterasu, as well as the moon deity Tsukuyomi, and the storm god Susanowo. According to Eliade, the Japanese cosmogonic myth is firstly instructive regarding the primordial situation, in which the whole is presented as a coincidentia oppositorum – heaven and earth, Izanagi and Izanami, together constituted the chaos, and the cosmogony begins with the separation of the two cosmic principles, followed by the re-union of those principles, in a hierogamy, the symbolical marriage between heaven and earth, creating the world and, thus, making creation depend upon sexuality (Eliade, 1977, pp. 181-185).

Throughout time, this court tale had a period of disappearance to be retrieved in early medieval Japan, when

the classical myth of the rock-cave was reinvented to fulfill a new role: to give mythological basis to the “ways” of poetry, kami worship, and Noh theatre (Breen, 2010, p. 155),

for

myths cannot make themselves relevant if they are mere tales of a distant past. It is only when they are actively applied in creative processes that they generate interest (Breen, 2010, p. 140)<sup>68</sup>.

At the time, poetry became not only ‘an arena in which myth found a new function’, but also a pretext for a distinction between Japanese and Chinese vocabulary. Chinese loanwords were shunned by the poets, poetry incorporated the initiation ceremonies of the Dharma Buddhism as a way to transmit poetic expertise, making use of mantras and mandalas, and the competition between lineages created a need for new insights into the sacred origins of waka (Breen, 2010, p. 142). Maintaining its nuclear primordial structure, the tale suffers a

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<sup>68</sup> ‘Beneath the surface of this apparently simple tale there are many layers of different origins. These layers are traces of power struggles between lineages from various parts of the Yamato inner sphere’ (Breen, 2010, p. 138).

'radical rework' (Breen, 2010, p. 143), with addings such as those the poet Fujowara-no-Tameaki (1230s-90s) created to narrate the invention of the first waka, thus including in the tale another layer as origination myth:

Then the sun-deity peeked out of the rock-cave. In the bright light emanating from her face, she appeared white, and the gods exclaimed: Ama omo-shiro ya ("Ah! A white face!"; or, "Ah! How fascinating!"). Since this time, striking things have been called omo-shiro ya. The sun-deity left the rock-cave and (...) this is called the beginning of heaven and earth. Amaterasu noticed a warbler that landed in a plum tree and said: Aoyagi no ito/uchinobete/uguisu no nuu/cho kasa wa/ume no hanagasa. The hood that the warbler weaves of fresh willow twigs – it looks like those hoods called plum blossoms. The meaning is that the plum flower that fell on the head of the warbler looked like a hood. This was the first waka of thirty-one syllables (Breen, 2010, p. 143)<sup>69</sup>.

In this origination myth

Amaterasu was met with the seven-syllable phrase ana omo-shiro ya, and she celebrated the "beginning of heaven and earth" by creating the first ever 31-syllable verse' ((Breen, 2010, p. 144).

The waka poetics and transmissions elaborated on the meaning of love and sex as a sacred union female and male, and as a source of all life.

They were inspired by markedly Tantric forms of Buddhism and linked the carnal way of sex celebrated in love poetry to Buddhist teachings about the nonduality of desire and enlightenment (...) initiated budding poets into the secret of the cosmogony itself and taught them that the world arose from waka (Breen, 2010, p. 144).

Thus, poetic creation, or the aesthetic creative process, is equalled to the creation of the cosmos, as well as the means to experience that original creative moment itself. More than that, by putting emphasis on the creation of the new – in this case, a new syllabical metric – this version of the myth extols originality in creation. It is through the creation of the new that the cosmogony, the very first

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<sup>69</sup> In: Katagiri, 1971-87, vol. 2, pp. 235-6.

creative command, is experienced, reenacted, actualized. Besides the mere creation, the creative command institutes a new order of creations.

In the myth, the momentous dance of Ama-no-Uzume is suggestive of a shamanic procedure, assembling into the originary myth a cultural reference that is unequivocally popular and archaic, which the court later aesthetized in the form of mi-kagura for the ritual of celebrating the mirror (the sacred object that, in the tale, reflected the image of Amaterasu). Mi-kagura derived from ancient kagura, that

was not so much an aesthetic performance designed to please an audience as a powerful and unpredicable rite. If the rock-cave myth is anything to go by, kagura must have involved sexually charged dancing and spirit possession (...) hardly a natural ingredient of formalized court ceremonial (...) Kagura was the very foundation of kami worship, and has survived in many different forms until the present (...) The myth conjures up the image of a kagura performance in which a priestess dances in front of a sacred place (a 'kami seat') and goes into a trance, allowing a kami to manifest itself by taking possession of her. (...) Over time, (...) the aspect of possession was toned down (Breen, 2010, p. 149).

The rites of kami worship, besides kagura, also made use of mandalas, mantras and secret transmissions, typical Tantric procedures, and the myth was adapted to turn the rock-cave into a prefiguration of the shrine and, ultimately, of the human body, where the merging of the female and male principles occurs. Heavily marked by Buddhist Tantric conceptions, these practices of kami worship in shrines established that hidden in the cave was the original source of all kami, raga, that is, desire, appearing in the form of a snake, the basic guise of all kami (Breen, 2010, p. 147), an iconography outstandingly suggestive of the kundaliní syndrome and, at the same time, of the proto-historic Jomon recurring representation of the snake<sup>70</sup>, both pointing to an innermost, embodied, yet

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<sup>70</sup> See note 66.

largely unconscious knowledge, universal to all humans, soteriological for the initiated, and accessible to common man by way of projection. Thus, in the kami worship ritual, the engagement of the body through dancing is the extroverted aspect of the conception of human body as the dwelling where the merging of the two cosmic principles or polarities occurs, the site for the re-enactment of the original creation or the creative command.

The development of all kinds of performative arts took place in the stages of the court, where popular performances (such as dengaku) were adopted and aestheticised, but also in shrine rituals and in temple ceremonies, becoming a model for festivals across Japan. Noh performance, unlike its rival dengaku, has a written record that includes playscripts, pedagogical and theoretical treatises that display a profound influence of the transmissions on poetry and kami worship. Noh performance displayed, therefore, a complexity of highly charged elements before an audience, and the myth of the rock-cave served primarily to legitimize Noh art as a divine practice. The earliest known Noh author, Zeami Motokiyo (1363-1443) writes that Noh originated with Ame-no-Uzume dance in front of the rock-cave (Breen, 2010, p. 153) and, later, that the myth was a 'sacred revelation on the process of creating fascination on the stage' (Breen, 2010, p. 154). This happened in three stages: first with the darkness, 'opening up an awareness beyond discursive thinking', or 'myo, anticipation, suspension of cognition'; after, with Amaterasu emergence, 'inducing a spontaneous feeling of surprise and joy', or 'hana, an emotional response, delight'; and, finally, the expression of this joy (omo-shiro, 'white faces; fascinating'), enabling the 'experience of the state of no-mind, sublimating the spontaneous delight into true fascination'. In this process, 'the audience experienced ultimate enlightenment in the form of union with the sun-goddess' (Breen, 2010, p. 154).

In the Noh performance, pathos is the element through which an unconditioned dynamic of consciousness is attained, by an identification with the creative potency, union with the sun-goddess.

The rock-cave myth would persist also under more recent forms of performance, such as the modern kagura. While the traditional kagura was a ritual procedure in the form of a performance, the modern kagura of the early Edo period was more like a pantomime, presented before an audience of non-initiated people.

It was at this time that the classical kami myths, and especially the rock-cave tale, became common knowledge among the general populace for the first time (Breen, 2010, p. 162).

In their stunning diversity, 'there is hardly a local tradition that does not feature the rock-cave tale in some form or other' (Breen, 2010, p. 160), the climax of the piece being the opening of the cave door:

While most other pieces were regarded as optional, the rock-cave was not, and a kagura session could not be brought to an end without the cave being opened (Breen, 2010, p. 162).

The emphasis put in the opening of the cave prefigures the primordial situation of the 'difficult passage', or rupture of plane, an initiatory ordeal implied in the change of the mode of being or state of consciousness, inaccessible to the fleshy, profane man, for

it presupposes becoming conscious of the necessity for abolishing contraries (...) and he who emerges from such an ordeal victorious is qualified to share in a superhuman condition (Eliade, 1995, pp. 62-66).

From the cosmogonic core of the myth, to its first written version, then to the waka, the kami worship, Noh and, finally, modern kagura, it is possible to see that an accurate concrete knowledge of the embodied creative potency is

displayed, in striking primordial images – that are obviously more overtly explicit and descriptive in symbolic complexes of initiatory transmission, such as the waka or kami worship. The primordial images are reminders of the original creation, with the cosmogonic whole followed by separation and then reunion of the two principles, but also that the process percolates – from the macrocosmic to the anthropocosmic scale – into the human body, accomplished through sexuality and aesthetic creation. They are reminders of the empowering knowledge that, through that process, man experiences the creative potency, exerts the creative command and re-enacts the original creation, thus fulfilling a cosmological creative teleology that is also his own. As Breen and Teeuwen remark, the disappearance of the kami myths from the public stage allowed for the myths to be studied without any ideological bias and, even more importantly, their fading from collective memory has also made it possible for them to be rediscovered afresh (Breen, 2010, p. 167). While the myth and its traditional forms of display, such as modern kagura,

faded from the direct environment (...) bracketed out of the mainstream culture as instances of idiosyncratic, fossilized “folklore” (Breen, 2010, p. 166),

the universal urge to assimilate all outer experiences to inner psychic events, as well as the pressing need to access and symbolically resolve, by way of projection, the unconscious secrets of the psyche, remained as imposing as ever – avidly scanning reality in search of the renderings of primordial images.

The succinct theoretical frame that Jiro Yoshihara built during the first years of the Gutai work – from August 1954, when the group was formed, to December 1956, with the Gutai Art Manifest – presented all that there was to know to attain ‘something of the order of creation’ or, in other words, to

accomplish the rendering of primordial images that engaged the artist as much as the viewer: an active implication of the body with the material in a truly experimental venture, that is, in a search for the new (Tiampo, 2003, 129)<sup>71</sup>. Freed from the conventions of content, language, meaning or representation, the field of invention was seemingly new, unexplored, and endless, while conversely the iconographic possibilities were defiantly spare. Even through the procedures inherent to the 'aestheticisation' of the creative process, the Gutai iconography consistently showed the concise, plain and powerful arrangements typical of primordial images. These immediately set forth the purposefulness of the new creation, and altogether conjure a numinous quality, directly responding to the need to access the unconscious secrets of the psyche, an embodied knowledge and a creative teleology that are met by way of projection. In the role of the most critical first viewer of the Gutai work, admitting no imitation or repetition, Jiro Yoshihara used his intuition to address the work of art by combining his knowledge of the Euro-American and the Japanese genealogies of modernism with the acknowledgement of a numinous attribute that emanated from the new, from the creation that was genuinely original and, therefore, universally avant-garde and valid for 'the advancement of the human race'<sup>72</sup>. For this reason, when approaching the experimental work of the group within the frame of kami celebrations, it seems logical to assume that the appropriation of a 'matrix of conceptual categories (...) as well as [of] an iconography of forms and actions' (Tiampo, 2003, p. 170) seems to have served the ultimate purpose of bringing

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<sup>71</sup> Looking at the works themselves, examining the documentary evidence and interpreting the *Gutai* journals both visually and textually, we can forge a new set of analytic tools. Finding order in the chaos, it is striking to note that all of the aesthetic propositions, all of which are very different, are linked conceptually to the main principles of the group, which Yoshihara formally articulated in the Gutai Manifesto in 1956'.

<sup>72</sup> Jiro Yoshihara in Gutai Journal, issue 1, January 1955 (Shoichi, 2004, p. 37).



forth this archaic and embodied level of knowledge, by way of projection, since it likely remained unconscious.

### PRIMORDIAL IMAGES IN THE GUTAI EXPERIMENTAL PRACTICE

"The sacred is strong, powerful, because it is *real*; it is efficacious and durable" (Elaide, 1977, p. 130).

In this approach, the diversity of manifestations that the creative process bears in the Guitai work falls into several categories of primordial images: the Centre of the World, the Change in the Mode of Being, the Ascension, the Return to the Origin, the Cosmological Solidarity, and the Union of the Polarities. These categories, however, are articulated in mutual equivalence and in close continuity to express both the numinous in the new and the creative teleology of man, through the complex of three cumulative experiences, accessing the creative potency, exerting the creative command and re-enacting the original creation.

Let us briefly recall the notion of primordial image in Gustav Jung's own words:

I call the image *primordial* when it possesses an *archaic* character. I speak of its archaic character when the image is in striking accord with familiar mythological motifs<sup>73</sup>. It then expresses material primarily derived from the collective unconscious, and indicates at the same time that the factors influencing the conscious situation of the moment are collective rather than personal (Jung, 1990, p. 263).

Let us further recall that when dealing with the 'suggestive power of the primordial images', as Jung put it,

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<sup>73</sup> Jung defines a mythological motif as 'a continually effective and recurrent expression that reawakens certain psychic experiences or else formulates them in an appropriate way' (Jung, 1990, p. 263).

the complications arising at this stage are no longer egotistic wish-conflicts, but difficulties that concern others as much as oneself. At this stage, it is fundamentally a question of collective problems, which have activated the collective unconscious because they require collective rather than personal compensation (Jung, 1990, p. 152)<sup>74</sup>.

Jung distinguishes the interest accorded by the conscious mind to these impersonal, universal problems between an illegitimate one, 'when they are either mere intellectual curiosity or a flight from unpleasant reality', and a legitimate one, 'when they arise from the deepest and truest needs of the individual' (Jung, 1990, p. 156).

It is easy to imagine that Jiro Yoshihara had the perception that the associations of artists that he knew, was part of, or had participated in, would never provide the environment for the creative accomplishment of the remarkable young artists that, more and more, came to him looking for advice. True to what he intuitively sought in art, and aware of the role of influence he was willing to impart and manage, he had, in all probability, an idea of the 'generalized ambiance of heightened creativity produced through group activity' (Tiampo, 2003, p. 170) that he would like to set up and surround himself with. And, if his 'extraordinary intuition' is anything to go by, he must have noticed in the artwork of those young artists a 'suggestive power' that not only arose from their 'deepest and truest needs', but indicated a collective factor that, on one hand, was striped of egotistic wish references and, on the other hand, met a collective dynamics of imagination, which altogether addressed to and claimed. With his empirical stance, he promoted the empowering environment that would lead to the conceptions of the Gutai Art Manifest: while the direct contact between the body and the material dismissed all content and its correlates

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<sup>74</sup> Jung adds that 'the more we become conscious of ourselves through self-knowledge, the more the layer of the personal unconscious that is superimposed on the collective unconscious will be diminished' (Jung, 1990, p. 152).

(meaning, representation, language), thus also doing away with egotistic wish references, the synergetic compelling situations (outdoor and stage exhibitions) enhanced, in the artists, the preexisting creative flow into the collective imagination, in a mutually validating and deeply insightful collective process.

## THE CENTRE OF THE WORLD

### 1. THE CIRCLE

It is not a coincidence that Jiro Yoshihara trifled with the icon of the circle throughout his work to eventually make it his ultimate goal and definite symbol. When going through his artistic work, even before Gutai, it is possible to notice that the circle is a recurring representation, a lurking visual presence, luring regardless of its rendering in each different pictorial episode:

Critics such as Ichiro Haryu suggested, in 1973, that the circle is a motif that underlies Yoshihara's career as a painter, and Fumio Fukui, in 1984, pointed out that the circle motif reappears consistently throughout Yoshihara's work beginning with the early fish paintings (Haito, 2005, p. 187)<sup>75</sup>.

The circle, to repeat, is the most elementary form of setting up a partition between two areas of different kinds (Eliade, 1971, p. 371), a straightforward shape of enclosure, outlining a sacred place (Eliade, 1971, p. 370). The most striking difference between the circles that Yoshihara painted before Gutai and the ones he painted after 1965 until his death in 1972 is that the latter bear the scale of a human body, going beyond the area of reach of the limbs, outlining the bigger extent of the vital space, the field of energy that also delimitates the closer embodied consciousness. Among the many possibilities of scale, Yoshihara

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<sup>75</sup> Jiro Yoshihara, in: *Circles and afterward: 1963-1972*.

chose to experiment within the human scale and, rather straightforwardly, the scale of his own body. Within the complex of ideas concerning the 'centre', such as it seems to be the case, the one that explains the ubiquitous use of Centres of the World refers that every human being tends, even unconsciously, towards the Centre, and towards his own centre, in the deeply rooted desire to find himself at the very heart of the real, where he can find integral reality – sacredness (Eliade, 1961, p. 54). Additionally, one of the most impressive ideas, previously mentioned, defines the Centre as a 'supremely "creational place", because the source of all reality and consequently of energy and life is to be found there' (Eliade, 1971, p. 377). This idea derives from cosmological traditions that express the idea of creation borrowing from embryology (Eliade, 1971, p. 377), considering that 'the creation of a sacred place is, in its way, a cosmogony, a creation of the world' (Eliade, 1961, p. 52) and that,

since the creation of the world began in a given centre, the creation of man could only take place on that same spot, *real* and *living* in the highest degree (Eliade, 1971, p. 378).

Furthermore, Yoshihara gave a hint to the ultimate sense of his circles when he explained that he chose to paint circles because they were 'convenient' and freed him from having to find any other motif, yet he found them difficult to be drawn satisfactorily, which made him 'study the fundamental principles of art', finding himself before a 'possibility of infinity in the form of endless trail'. If the creation of the circle is viewed as the construction of a sacred place, in a scale that suggests that the circle is a projection of the vitality, life force and, thus, of the creative power of the artist, it is possible to assume that this sacred place is the complete embodied being of the artist himself. Therefore, for the artist, the challenge of creating a circle, a sacred space, is at the same time the challenge of

creating the world, a cosmogony, by creating his own complete body anew, synthesized in a brand new creative command. And, in the same way as in the origination myth of the kami shrine rites (in which the shrine prefigures the human body, the site of cosmogony) and of the waka (with the creation of a new syllabical metric, a new order of creation), the brand new creative command is a glimpse, a revelation, a hierophany, of the original creative command of cosmogony itself, a re-enactment of the original creation. This was by no means an easy task, and Jiro Yoshihara would not skip any step, as the description of Sadamasa Motonaga of one of Yoshihara's creative impasses shows:

I was struck by the depth of the anguish that our leader Jiro Yoshihara was suffering from in this artist's slump. (...) For some three months this went on. (...) Still I was impressed by his attitude of sticking to what he started until it was finished by whatever means and without compromise (Yamamoto, 2003, pp. 172-173) (fig. 42).

## 2. THE ENCLOSURE

The main sense of the symbolism of the Centre of the World, however, corresponds to one of the ultimate functions of a sacred place, which is the reunion of Heaven with Earth. 'The bridge or ladder between Heaven and Earth were possible because they were set up in a Centre of the World', and the union of Heaven with Earth 'alludes to the immortality that is attained in consequence of the ascent into Heaven' (Eliade, 1961, p. 45). The primordial image of the Centre, as it were, is met chiefly in the early Oriental civilisations (Eliade, 1961, p. 41) and is replicated into figurations such as the Cosmic Mountain, the World Tree, or the Centre Pillar, which sustains the planes of the Cosmos. Communication between Heaven and Earth becomes possible by means of these Centres (Eliade, 1961, p. 45). Their summit is not only the highest point on

Earth, but is also assimilated to its navel, 'the point at which creation began', a central point where numerous traditions place Paradise. Therefore, the ascent to the summit is 'equivalent to an ecstatic journey to the Centre of the World' (Eliade, 1961, p. 43), by a cosmic axis. Furthermore, when a dwelling-place is assimilated as a Centre of the World,

the act of climbing or ascending symbolises *the way towards absolute reality*; and to the profane consciousness, the approach towards that reality arouses an ambivalent feeling, of fear and of joy, of attraction and repulsion, and involves the ideas of death, love and deliverance, representing the cessation of the profane human condition, that is, a breaking of the ontological plane (Eliade, 1961, p. 51).

As the place of passage from the profane mode of being to a non-profane mode of being, a place of ontological mutation,

every "construction", and every "contact" with a "centre" involves doing away with profane time, and entering the mythical *illud tempus* of creation (Eliade, 1971, p. 378).

When Kazuo Shiraga installed his conical structure of red wood logs (named 'Please come in'), at the Ashiya Park for the Challenge to the Midsummer Burning Sun, in July 1955, he was for all purposes constructing a centre, building an enclosure. The enclosure is among the most ancient known forms of man-made sacred places, such as a simple circle of stones, or Shiraga's conical structure. Inside that conic structure, naked from the waist up, he performed a vigorous exercise carving the red logs with a hatchet, an action in which his intention was to produce 'one endless painting through carving out an internal view', that the viewers could afterwards see by entering the cone (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 25), hence the name Please come in. Tiampo finds in this action and the scars it left, the 'frenzied action of the *kami-oroshi* that makes way for structured, aesthetic production of the *kami-asobi*', and also that

in the *Kurama no hi*, a similarly shaped conical structure is shaken vigorously in order to call down and manifest the deity (Tiampo, 2003, p. 172)<sup>76</sup>.

The archaic symbolism of the enclosure, however,

does not only imply and indeed signify the continued presence of a hierophany within its bounds, it also serves the purpose of preserving profane man from the danger to which he would expose himself by entering without due care. The sacred is always dangerous to anyone who comes into contact with it unprepared, without having gone through the “gestures of approach”(Eliade, 1971, p. 370).

As it were, Kazuo Shiraga’s work ‘Please Come In’ shows the exactitude of the measure in the use of violence for the Gutai ethos – purposeful, conscious and precise, never cathartic and, even less, chaotic:

Without doubt, it was him [Yoshihara] the only truly conscious of the dangers that the excess of enthusiasm entailed. Regularly, he would remind the young artists around him about the danger of “romanticism” (...) Yoshihara wanted to bring life to matter, to make the creation alive, but always remaining lucid, that is, thinking of the “result” (koka) – what the artist had before him –, without being darkened by the gesture. In this sense, he was the consciousness that, as in every epic venture, allows and legitimates the resort to fury (Lucken, 1999, 17)<sup>77</sup>.

It is most likely that Shiraga’s action inside the cone of logs was, in itself, highly aestheticised, in fact supremely aestheticised: even if it did not enact a ‘gesture of

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<sup>76</sup> Tiampo explores the analogy between the rhythm of the matsuri and some of the work procedures in Gutai: ‘The rhythm of this festival is an exemplary one – a chaotic, almost violent beginning called the *kami oroshi* to call forth the *kami*, or deity, followed by the *kami asobi* during which the deity is entertained and placated, followed by the *kami okuri* when the deity is returned. For a study of the Gutai, the first two stages are the most interesting, as they concern the embodiment of spirit and the use of performance in ritual. The first stage, in which the *kami* is invoked, often involves the creation of chaos, disorder and violence in order to make the gods present and visible in matter, which is also a reference to the Shinto belief in a dualism of the spirits—that they are considered to be evil as well as good forces, and so need to be placated. The second stage, the *kami asobi*, emerges out of chaotic fervor, and structures the creative energies. Most often, this phase takes the form of art or the performing arts, and is highly aestheticized’.

<sup>77</sup> On the original version, ‘Sans doute, était-il [Yoshihara] le seul vraiment conscient des dangers que trop d’enthousiasme pouvait faire courir. Régulièrement, il rappelait aux jeunes artistes qui l’entouraient le danger du “romantisme” (...) Yoshihara voulait donner vie à la matière, rendre vivante la création, mais toujours en restant lucide, c’est-à-dire en pensant au “résultat” (koka) – ce que l’artiste a devant lui –, sans se laisser totalement griser par le geste. En ce sens, il fut la conscience qui, comme dans toute épopée, permet et légitime le recours à la furie’ (translation by me).

approach', it enacted a creative, original action that corresponded to the exemplary actions occurred in the mythical illud tempus of creation.

In addition to this, inherent to the structure of the 'centre of the world' stands the 'nostalgia for paradise'. The centres of the world such as the ladder, the mountain or the tree, express the idea that, in illo tempore, there was an extreme proximity between Heaven and Earth before they were abruptly separated and distanced. The easy access between Heaven and Earth show that the

primordial man enjoyed a beatitude, a spontaneity and freedom (...); in the paradisiac age, the gods came down to Earth and mingled with men; and men, for their part, could go up to Heaven by climbing a mountain, the tree, creeper or ladder, or might even be taken up by birds (Eliade, 1977, p. 58).

These marks of the man of the paradisiac epoch disappeared with the 'fall', with the distancing between Heaven and Earth, in an ontological mutation of man's own condition (Eliade, 1977, p. 58). By placing himself at a 'centre of the world', Shiraga seemingly seeks to embody the very beatitude, spontaneity and freedom of the primordial man, or otherwise extols this condition as essential to his creative intent.

Finally, Eliade speaks of two kinds of traditions concerning the 'centre of the world', 'one group of traditions that evinces man's desire to place himself at the 'centre of the world' without any effort, while another stresses the difficulty, and therefore the merit, of attaining it'. Man's desire to place himself naturally and permanently in a sacred place – at the 'centre of the world', at the core of reality and, through a short cut, transcend human condition – which was easier to satisfy on the frame of ancient societies, became more difficult to achieve on subsequent civilizations, with notions such as the initiatory trial, that correspond



to figurations such as the labyrinth, the mandala or the initiatory cabin (Eliade, 1971, pp. 382-383).

## CHANGE IN THE MODE OF BEING

### 1. INITIATION: THE INITIATORY CABIN

In the Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition, in July 1956, the second outdoor exhibition of the group, amidst the trees of the Ashiya pine grove, Tsuruko Yamazaki suspended 60 cm above the ground a cubic structure screened with red vinyl. During the day, the viewer could crawl inside and experience the entrapping red atmosphere; during the night, the lighting projected on the translucent vinyl the size changing shadows of the users to be seen outside. Saburo Murakami installed a rocket-like cylindrical white structure covered in white cloth, the upper cone metallic and opening to the sky. The viewer could crawl inside through a small tent-like opening and look up to the sky, hence the name Sky.

There is an evident continuity between the circle, the enclosure and the initiatory cabin, which share the attribute of defining a special space, sacred in the sense that entails a change in the mode of being for those who enter it, a mode different from the mundane. However, the cabin, the forest, and darkness, are worldwide recurrent scenarios where rites of initiation take place, archetypal images that 'express the eternal psychodrama of a violent death followed by rebirth' (Eliade, 1995, pp. 35-37). It is not difficult to see these two pieces as figurations of the archaic initiatory cabin or hut, starting by the deliberate, complying and self-conscious way of entering the place, followed by the intense and overall changing experience of staying inside their compelling

environments, to eventually return outside.

The ordeals of initiation are procedures that imply ritual death, followed by resurrection or a new birth, death corresponding to the temporary return to Chaos (hence the paradigmatic expression end of a mode of being) in order to assume another mode of being, as a new man (Eliade, 1995, p. xii-xiii). This follows the conception that a state cannot be changed without first being annihilated, and this obsession with the beginnings is the obsession with the absolute beginning, the comogony, or original creation (Eliade, 1995, p. xii-xiii). Initiation is a primordial image that expresses 'birth to a higher mode of being', through the regression to a preformal state, to a latent mode of being (complementary to the precosmogonic chaos) rather than total annihilation as death in the profane world is taken (Eliade, 1995, p. xv). Initiation puts an end to the natural man and introduces him to culture, namely the origin myth. Thus, initiatory rites are deeply cultural events, because they reiterate the cosmogony and its creative power, regenerative also of the collective. All the ordeals of initiation follow the idea of a death to the profane condition, one of the most important features being the forgetfulness of language and, in general, a dramatic transformation in the previous bodily existence, expressed with enduring impact over sense-experience, a shift in its organization. This change of the mode of being is also due to having learned the origin myth, which tells of the sacredness of life, the world and the cosmos, and their binding as creations. For these reasons, the initiatory cabin is also figured not only as the belly of a devouring monster who digests the novice, in which case the initiatory site gains the morphology of a tube or tunnel, but also as the womb, signifying the return to an embryonic condition, to a virtual, pre-formal, pre-cosmic mode, assuming egg-like or spherical figurations.

## 2. THE RUPTURE OF PLANE

At the Challenge to the Midsummer Burning Sun, one of the pieces that Saburo Murakami presented was an empty frame, hanging from the branch of a tree, suspended in the air, as if waiting for its subject to appear; he was photographed in it, posing with the arms crossed behind the head. Three months later, at the 1<sup>st</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, he initiated the work Screens of paper, that he would repeat many times throughout his career, for it became his most renowned piece and one identifying icon of the Gutai art. Murakami prepared different structures of frames with screens of kraft paper and leaped through them, leaving the holes and torn paper as the evidence of the action and also as a final piece of artwork. He had realized that by putting layers of paper in both sides of the frame, and placing several frames close to each other, the result was better:

The impact of the body on the paper was very violent and resulted in a loud noise, especially during the first jumping trials; the artist often lost his balance and fell onto the ground (Bertozzi, 1991, p. 34).

He would also present this work at the Gutai Art Using the Stage, in May 1957, where the whole backstage wall was made of paper; coming from the back of the stage he first walked along the wall touching it and suddenly started tearing it, eventually disappearing into the back. Any rupture of plane ultimately prefigures the passage from one mode of being to another, in continuity with the archaic idea that a state cannot be changed without first being annihilated. Murakami's leaps through the paper screens, tearing them to create the work of art, can be seen as a representation of this paradigmatic human situation, since he was 'hole after hole, making forms by destroying form' (Tiampo, 2003, p. 122).

Complementary, primordial images that are expressed by the 'breaking through planes' deal with the abolition of time or the order of time (Eliade, 1961, p. 82), usually as a 'dangerous passage', or 'paradoxical transfer' (Eliade, 1995, p. 65), since that shift between dimensions, which come to mean transcendent states, is not accessible to fleshy man and requires a change in the mode of being. Murakami's break through the plane of paper seems to be a concrete response to Gutai's empirical quest to insert time and space into painting:

Absent has been time itself participating in the spatiality of the picture. The Gutai group's urge for discovery demands the element of time as well as the element of space in order to give a full aesthetic impact. Dispensing with the picture frame, leaping over the barriers, transforming time that does not move into living time, we seek a new kind of pictorial art (Tiampo, 2003, p. 122)<sup>78</sup>.

## ASCENSION

### 1. FLIGHT

The exhibition Gutai Art Using the Stage opened with Kazuo Shiraga's presentation, three white panels with three dozen red reed sticks leaning at even distances, that fall down in a succession, like domino pieces; then, the middle panel opens to give way to the Sanbaso - Super Modern, a red-clothed figure with arms like wings, and a mask of a long beaked red nose. Under the large red sleeves, Shiraga was holding long reed sticks, one in each hand, moving the arms in wide gestures, the flexible sticks making them smooth and swift through the air. It is immediate to apprehend this character as a winged creature, and it is intuitive to find affinities with some of the following works of the artist: on the 2nd Gutai Art Using the Stage, in April 1958, Shiraga opened the presentations again, this time with two people each moving through the air a giant fan; these

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<sup>78</sup> Originally published as On Gutai Art, in Gutai, 1957, 7.

fans were in all likelihood, the prototype for the Object, Red Fan, of 1965 (fig. 43), and paintings of this period were made by sliding through the paint a long tube, fixed on one of the extremes, producing the shape of an opened fan (fig. 43). The morphological continuity of these works is significant because they practically exhaust the visual iconography of Shiraga's work, apart from two other types of objects, one resembling internal organs or brains (fig. 44), the other delicate boxes prefiguring the house (fig. 44). In addition to this, their continuity with other works of the artist, such as the paintings with the feet, within a symbolism of ascension, is coherent and revealing.

According to Eliade, the 'ecstatic character of the ascension is in no doubt'. There are two different types of primordial images concerning ascension, one relating to bird-men and flight, the other to the experience of ascent and 'magical flight' (Eliade, 1977, p. 101). As a primordial image, flight refers to the human aspiration to

breaking-out from a situation that has become "locked" or "petrified", the rupture of plane that makes it possible to pass from one mode of being into another – in short, liberty 'of movement', freedom to change the situation, to abolish a conditioning system (Eliade, 1977, p. 110).

The nostalgia for flight is inherent to this human aspiration for 'freedom', and many traditions tell that in the mythical age the power of flight extended to all man, all could reach heaven, whether flying on their own, or on the wings of a fabulous bird or on the clouds (Eliade, 1989, p. 478), while, on a profane level, the power of flight expresses intelligence, understanding of secret things or metaphysical truths (Eliade, 1989, p. 479). The archaic and exemplary image of flight becomes charged with new meanings, discovered in the course of new

awakenings of consciousness (Eliade, 1977, p. 106), showing that the roots of freedom are to be sought in the depths of the psyche.

## 2. HANG-GLIDER TO ECSTASY

Hanging on ropes to slide his feet over the canvas at quickly changing paces, Kazuo Shiraga resolutely spreads the coloured oil paste, guiding it through the surface and allowing it to guide him (fig. 45).

While I am painting, I experience an expanding exhilaration, as if I were on the slope of pure white virgin snow, a shining silver world spreading out before my eyes where no one has skied before. I want to ski across it with complete freedom (Shiraga, 2003, p. 12)<sup>79</sup>.

Each painting is a short vibrant event, each canvas a different new dance, in which the paint is in continuity with both the matter and the energy of the body, as Shiraga explains:

Tantric Bouddhism, releasing the potential energy of man, acts upon him developping his gifts. I myself can't reach those arcanes. However, through the method of painting with the feet, I believe I reach a state close to that<sup>80</sup>.

The ecstatic experience of ascension is the existential situation associated with the symbols and images relating to 'magical flight' (Eliade, 1977, p. 102) and integrates a universally diffused symbolism of ascension which expresses two purposes, transcendence and freedom, both the one and the other obtained by a rupture of the plane of experience, and expressive of an ontological mutation of the human being (Eliade, 1977, 108), primarily conveyed by the

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<sup>79</sup> Skiing over virgin snow.

<sup>80</sup> Shiraga, in *Le Dieu Fudô et ma peinture*, Gutai.com, <http://pagesperso-orange.fr/articide.com/gutai/fr/accueil.htm>, accessed in 5 June 2010. In the French version, 'Le bouddhisme Tantrique en libérant l'énergie potentielle de l'homme, exerce sur lui une action, et développe ses dons. Je n'ai pas pour ma part la capacité d'atteindre à ses arcanes. Cependant, à travers la méthode de peinture avec les pieds, je crois être parvenu à un état qui en est très proche'.

abolition of weight. While hanging by ropes to paint with the feet is mainly a practical option, it likely enabled Shiraga to move as swiftly, lightly and accurately as his own dynamics of consciousness at that moment, that is, the moment of 'creation', allowing for a self-accomplishment that was not merely recorded in the result of the events occurring beneath his feet. In doing this Shiraga was, yet again, building a 'centre of the world', a reunion between Heaven and Earth, that is, concretely creating the means to retrieve a condition of spontaneity, typical of the primordial man; in illo tempore, a liana connected Heaven and Earth (Eliade, 1977, p. 63). The coherence between the procedures, the intents and every plastic formulation involved in the creative process is striking, their simplicity and 'teleological directness' (Jung, 1990, p. 3)<sup>81</sup> revealing of an authenticity that can only derive from the archaic and embodied.

The footprints stripe installed by Akira Kanayama at the Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition, in July 1956, can also be taken as a plastic expression of ascension, as well as a cryptic formulation of the conjunction of opposites, a primordial image otherwise clear in Kanayama's work. The white stripe with black large shoeprints crossed the ground of the pine grove, swerving around works and trees, to terminate on the top of a tree, seemingly the trace of a 'concrete' climbing. Its figurative nature, that brought so much questioning to Jiro Yoshihara, is exceptional in the context of Akira Kanayama's abstract work but, as a primordial image, the Footprints is in complete consonance with his other pieces, which consistently reveal primordial images of 'the return to the origin' and of 'the union of the polarities'. Its sense as an image of ascension, of connection between Heaven and Earth, thus, of change in the mode of being, is self-evident, patent on the 'concrete' climbing of the tree. The figurative

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<sup>81</sup> Jung states the 'teleological directness of everything psychic'.

iconography of the footprints, that was probably an empirical response to the direct impact of the vitality in nature at the site, seems to be a reminder of the condition of man, 'always being thrown upwards, bound by the feet by the organic side of his animal origin' (Clark, 1997, pp. 111-113)<sup>82</sup>. The footprints bring forth this tension, which formulates the basic inner psychic conflict of man, but lead the course to its resolution, with the archaic image of the Tree of the World, that connects Earth to Heaven.

## RETURN TO THE ORIGIN

### 1. THE EMBRYO

The 'the union of the polarities' and the 'the return to the origin' are primordial images related in direct continuity: the union of the polarities stands for the empirical, bodily process that will eventually result in the return to the origin, to an unconditioned state, the state of freedom, of self-accomplishment or self-realization. The human situation of return to the origin, or aspiration to the return to the origin, is expressed both as the return to an embryonic state, pre-formal, or a temporary return to chaos, with the merging of all forms. Akira Kanayama's work evinces the two categories, the embryo and the merging of all forms.

Between 1952 and 1954, before Gutai, Kanayama painted several series of geometrical compositions, some of them rather minimalistic, in which he depicted either two dots, one red and one blue, or two lines, one red and one blue, in preponderant visual relation in the field of the composition, as polarities (fig. 46). Following the entrance in the Gutai group, he worked in paintings done

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<sup>82</sup> O Vazio Pleno (The full-void), 1960.



with automatic drawing machines, that resulted in an overall compact mesh of lines, where structure, direction, intensity or distribution became indistinct, the loss of attributes that is a trait of chaos, or of the merging of all forms (fig. 47).

On the Challenge to the Midsummer Burning Sun, in July 1955, Kanayama placed a delicate shining translucent red ball at the centre of a large square concrete area. At the 1<sup>st</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, in October 1955, he presented a suspended white balloon that was lighted and, at the One Day Outdoor Exhibition, in April 1956, he installed several floating balloons. At the Gutai Art Using the Stage, in May 1957, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Using the Stage, in April 1958, Kanayama presented several inflatable balloons. In the first exhibition, Kanayama inflated a balloon that was on the floor, which was randomly painted on stage by an automatic machine and briefly shown, before several people cut into its inside and lit it with a red light. On the 5<sup>th</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, in September 1958, he showed another inflatable floor balloon, which, instead of the random mesh of lines made by a machine, bore myriads of small blue and red dots, resulting again in an overall uniform composition (fig. 48). At the 8<sup>th</sup> Gutai Art Exhibition, in August 1959, he presented a large oval opened object, like the shell of an egg, electrified inside and out with numerous light bulbs (fig. 49). The series of balloons present the archetypal image of the embryo, or cosmogonic egg,

which cannot be explained by any empirical or rationalist interpretation of the egg looked upon as a seed (...) and bears not so much upon birth as upon a rebirth *modelled* on the creation of the world (...) the basic idea is not that of ordinary birth, but rather the *repeating of the archetypal birth* of the cosmos, the imitation of the cosmogony (Eliade, 1971, p. 414).

In initiatory contexts, from the return to the embryonic state, the novice can do one of five things: resume existence, with all the possibilities intact; reimmerse

himself in the cosmic sacrality; attain to a higher state of existence; prepare himself for the participation in the sacred; begin an entirely different, transcendent mode of existence (Eliade, 1995, p. 58). In any case, the newness of this life, its autonomy, finds its expression in the image of the 'absolute beginning', image whose structure is anthropocosmic, deriving at once from embryology and from cosmogony (Eliade, 1995, p. 60). Kanayama's inflatable balloons – particularly the one covered with a multitude of red and blue dots, expressing the polarization that presides every cosmic creation – can be taken as figurations of that 'absolute beginning', claimed by Gutai for every artistic creation. And, in this figuration, Kanayama's use of light, the aspect of irradiation that the balloons bear, is consonant with the idea of the hatching of the 'cosmic egg' at the dawn of time, errupting for the primeval creation as fire or ignition.

## 2. THE MERGING OF ALL FORMS

The merging of all forms, to repeat, is an expression of the 'return to the origin' that results from the union of the polarities, the representation of the empirical embodied process of self-realization. At a less elementary level, for the mind that cannot conceive perfection unless all opposites are present in their fulness, it does not express a return to 'the chaos that existed before any forms were created, but the undifferentiated *being* in which all forms are merged', (Eliade, 1971, p. 420). In the process of individuation, according to Jung, the solution of a disrupting inner conflict through the formation of a symbol (the primordial image that manifests the integrating archetype), requires the full parity of the opposing forces within the psyche. However, more commonly, the merging of all forms 'into one single, vast, undifferentiated unity is an exact reproduction of the "total" mode of reality' (Eliade, 1971, p. 399). It is within this

archaic sense that the collective behaviour of amalgamation enacted during the traditional festivals, such as the Japanese matsuri or the Brazilian carnival, can be understood. In their turn, Kazuo Shiraga's *Challenge to the Mud*, presented at the 1st Gutai Art Exhibition, in October 1955, as well as his paintings made with the feet, can be seen as figurations of the 'merging of all forms'.

Shiraga's first non figurative paintings were exclusively crimson red. Either painting with the nails, fingers or, later, with the feet, the aim was, seemingly, the creation of an amalgam, leaving the traces of the process of mixing (fig. 50). After the visit of Michel Tapié, Shiraga added other colours that he would briefly knead with the feet, in purposeful and swift movements, the chromatic clash brought into fusion in some areas within the tempestuous field of matter (figs. 51-52). His *Challenge to the Mud* is paradigmatic of this process, an action as much as a field of matter, both to be aesthetically apprehended. Made by using the entire body, *Challenge to the Mud*, however, claims matter as the field for the energetic extension of the body, which amounts to the body itself, unbound. In his essay on Kazuo Shiraga, *Inner bipolarity*, Hirai Soichi explains how

the artist's works were influenced by the *kenka danjiri*, a festival where quarrels regularly resulted in bloodshed and even death, that was held every summer in Amagasaki,

adding that it was

interesting to note that the culture of Amagasaki itself was characterized by polarity, great respect for art and literature combined with a passion for violence and a disregard for death (Shiraga, 2003, p. 143).

Within the frame of archaic behaviour, the overflowing energy typical of the collective celebratory atmosphere of the festival aims at a regenerative entanglement, either by violence or by sex, in quarrels or in orgies, effecting 'a

total fusion of emotions in which neither “form” nor “law” is observed’ (Eliade, 1971, p. 358). This total fusion shows ‘the will to abolish the past totally by abolishing all creation’, representing ‘chaos or the ultimate disappearance of limits and, as time goes, the inauguration of the Great Time, of the ‘eternal moment’, of non-duration’. In this scenario,

license is let loose, all commands are violated, all contraries are brought together, and all this is simply to effect the dissolution of the world – of which the community is a copy – and restore the primeval *illud tempus* which is obviously the mythical moment of the beginning (Eliade, 1971, pp. 399–400).

## COSMOLOGICAL SOLIDARITY

### 1. THE SOIL IN PROCESS

The merging of all forms and the symbolic continuity between regeneration, primeval creation, and fertility, projected in collective behaviour such as the orgy, imply the primordial image of cosmological solidarity, and its attribute of regeneration (previously exposed in regard to Lygia Clark’s hallucinatory experience in Carboneras). In the context of chthonian hierophanies, or revelations related with the earth after the appearance of agriculture, ‘the primal intuition of the Earth shows it as the foundation of every expression of existence’ (Eliade, 1971, p. 242), something immediately experienced and accepted, forming a live and active cosmic unity (Eliade, 1971, p. 242), an inexhaustible fount of existences, and of existences that reveal themselves directly to man (Eliade, 1971, p. 243). However, the intuition of the earth is initially a cosmic one: before the causes of conception were known man had no part in creation and maternity was believed to result from a direct insertion of the child in the mother’s womb. Men were related to each other through the mothers only, precariously enough, while the feeling of solidarity with the

surrounding microcosm, with the place, was a prevailing one; the precariousness of human paternity was balanced by the solidarity existing between man and various protective forces or substances in nature (Eliade, 1971, p. 244).

Furthermore, 'every expression of life is the result of the fertility of the earth' (Eliade, 1971, p. 254), not only because earth produces living things, but because it regenerates life: 'everything that comes from the earth is endowed with life, and everything that goes back into earth is given new life' (Eliade, 1971, p. 253). While the mythological destiny of water is to open and close cosmic cycles, the destiny of earth is to stand at the beginning and end of every biological form. Every direct organic bond of a form with the water from which it emerges is immediately broken – a gulf between form and pre-form. Conversely, earth is never parted from the forms it has given life to, because they constitute a living whole in which 'all that *is* on earth is united with everything else (...) due to the *life* which is the same in them all'. Their organic solidarity results from the biological unity that establishes 'a magic, sympathetic bond between the earth and the forms it has engendered' (Eliade, 1971, p. 255).

Kazuo Shiraga's Challenge to the Mud and his paintings made with the feet can be perceived as figurations of this bond of solidarity between the body and the matter of the world, the mud and the paint equalled to Earth itself, and the power of the body equaled to the Earth's creative principle, shown as the force of life, of a living being. This corresponds with Shiraga's idea of physicality:

The quality of which I speak here is (...) the unified condition of the spirit and body which is acquired through living and is founded on the body we are born with. (...) What has been laid up in the body is too green. This growth that I call quality is constantly ready to burst forth out of the body as powerful force. As long as I stand on solid earth and breathe this energy continues to will itself outward (Shinichiro, 1993, p. 27).

Shiraga candidly confirms this organic accord, 'I stop where my body feels it is right' (Shiraga, 2003, p. 18)<sup>83</sup>. The accomplishment of a work of art is, thus, equated to the engendering work of the Earth itself: enacted by the living body and upheld by a bond of organic solidarity.

## 2. GERMINAL LUMINOSITIES

The physical challenge to exhibit outdoors was a pull towards a more concrete enactment of the body, and artists such as Akira Kanayama and Atsuko Tanaka, who had until then worked in more abstract and, to a certain extent, conceptual references, came out with surprising works, more directly empirical than Yoshihara probably expected. Before Gutai, during a long stay at the hospital, Atsuko Tanaka started a series of works using numbers and, afterwards, the first work she exhibited following the encounter with Yoshihara was the work *Bell*, that she showed at the Ashiya Art Exhibition in 1954. The piece, that could be designated nowadays as a sound installation, consisted of 20 bells disposed in the space, connected in sequence to a switch to be operated by the visitor, and which started the bells to ring, each at a time, at regular intervals, in a crescent volume of sound in relation to the distance from the observer. This was a leap from the images with the numbers of the period of the hospital, the piece dealing with the implication of the body within space, with the subtle dimension of sound, for the apprehension of the work. This progress is indicative of a change in the organization of sensory experience, and Tanaka's long sickness may explain it, if understood within the complex of initiatory death, that includes sickness as one of its typical events, deeply transforming in

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<sup>83</sup> Action and Painting Same.

the cases of long or severe illnesses, endowing the recovered patient with a 'new identity'.

During the first year with the Gutai group Tanaka explored the actual qualities of fabric, such as the hovering lightness and shine of silk, or the possibility to be spread and cover space and, at the Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition in July 1955, she came to an impressive outcome of her creative research with cloth. At the Ashiya pine grove, she installed seven white cloth abstract body-like shapes bearing linear electric bulbs on the axis of the 'limbs', 'torso' and 'head', as well as a cross-like stylization of the body, that had electric bulbs orderly disposed on the whole surface. Yet, the most striking aspect was the scale of the works, a feature that allows for the understanding of these magnified prototypes of the human body as figurations of the energetic field of the body or, more precisely, of the larger field of embodied consciousness. The works were imposing during the day, by their size and empathic quality, but especially outstanding during the night, with the lights turned on. In the magnification of the scale of the human, and namely of its subtler aspect of energy – which means both the force of life and consciousness – it is possible to see a 'cosmicization' of the body, a solidarity that goes beyond the organic level to participate fully in every dimension of existence, in a cosmological solidarity. It is in this symbolic operation that the primordial image of the germinal luminosities may be recognized.

The primordial image of the flickering widespread nature of consciousness, that of the scintillae, of 'seeds of light broadcast in the chaos', rests on the quasi-conscious state of unconscious contents and, notably, brings forward the nature of the archetype itself: bearing a 'certain effulgence or quasi-consciousness' that determines its numinosity (Jung, 1990, p. 62), because the archetype is an

attractor of psychic energy that is eventually put forward through primordial images. Therefore, according to Jung, while the light is the *lumen naturae*, which illuminates consciousness, the *scintillae* are germinal luminosities shining forth from the darkness of the unconscious (Jung, 1990, p. 64). If this primordial image is anything to go by, Tanaka expresses the nature of the quest that Jiro Yoshihara had them all engaged in, that of allowing for the primordial images to emerge and be manifested, in the process of finding 'something of the order of creation'. Later, at the Gutai art Using the Stage in May 1957, Atsuko Tanaka reiterated this archetypal image in her performance *Stage Clothes*, installing a huge red dress as the backdrop for the performance to indicate the cosmicization of the body, illustrating the embodied scintillation of psyche by striping shining layer after shining layer of the outfit, and presenting the *Electric Dress*, a full-body electric-bulbs garment to stress the overall embodied attribute of consciousness.

### 3. INTEGRATION OF THE FEMININE PRINCIPLE

One evident feature of the Gutai's extremely spare figurative iconography, especially concerning the human body, is the shape that the latter recurrently assumes, from Atsuko Tanaka's stylizations to Kazuo Shiraga's *Sanbaso - Super Modern*: arms wide open in a horizontal direction, crossing the torso and legs that bear a vertical position, in a cross-like structure. The stylization of the human body into a cross-like figure (which with Christianity is associated to the cross of Christ, whether in the Greek variation with all bars of the same size, or in the Roman variation, with the vertical bar longer) has got the archaic sense of the integration of the feminine principle (figs. 53-54).



The Trinity is not, for sure, a Christian “invention”. It has precedents on Ancient History, in Babylon, Greece, Egypt. “The groups of triads constitute an archetype of the history of religions that the Christian Trinity probably wanted to imitate in the beginning” (Jung). The Trinity corresponds to a certain view of God, closely related with the evolution of consciousness, typical of our time. As every dogma, it expresses, in a condensed way, the state of affairs of the psychic life at a certain moment of history. The inner psychic tensions, as they are felt today, translate a void that halts the process of enlargement of consciousness. But what could be missing in the Trinity? It is missing the four. What is the meaning of four? What does it represent? The four is the feminine principle, represented by the woman. “Four has the meaning of the feminine, the maternal, the physical, and three, the masculine, the paternal” (Jung)’ (Silveira, 1981, p. 266).

Significantly, the stylizations appear in the work of Tanaka as a response to exhibit at the Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition, the second outdoor edition, presumably when Tanaka was at ease, both as an artist and as a member of the Gutai group, to take her space, and to engage in organic solidarity with nature, or rather, with Earth. Although she had been an amateur seamstress and the materials she used were ‘gendered’, Tanaka stated,

My works have nothing to do with politics... neither do they have anything to do with gender. It doesn’t matter whether I am a man or a woman’ (Tiampo, 2004, p. 71).

In an experimental creative process, the aesthetic driven approach to any activity regards it as a primeval activity, an originary set of techniques and materials, regardless of its conjunctural status or history.

In addition to this, the primordial image of ascension that is noticeable in Shiraga’s Sanbaso-Super Modern allows for a development that concurs to the archaic sense of the integration of the feminine principle. Nise da Silveira came across several representations of birds with the wings spread open until she could fully disclose the archaic sense of the icon (through her usual analysis of

the iconographic progression towards archaic symbols) with the aid of complementary iconographic elements in the images of one of her patients,

Bird spreading the wings on the inside of a circle. The heart of the bird is the centre of the circle. With the wings spread out, the bird divides the circle in four equal parts. The presence of the heart, which constitutes the central organ of the bird, placed here at the centre of the circle brings precious elements. Eric Neumann studied the development of the archetype of the feminine. He specifies that the function of transformation inherent to this archetype, after having manifested itself under the primordial symbols of the womb, the uterus, the breasts, evolves by virtue of a natural process, until a new organ becomes visible, the heart, where the world of the spirit is born as a product created by nature itself. In fact, the heart does not give birth to the wisdom of the intellect but to the wisdom of feeling. (...) The bird in this picture, with the heart exposed, indicates that the wisdom that he owns is not the wisdom of the masculine principle with its power of discrimination, but the feminine wisdom of feeling' (Silveira, 1981, p. 279) (fig. 54).

### THE UNION OF THE POLARITIES

In the aesthetic creative quest of the avant-garde, a search for the new, the primordial image of the union of the polarities underlies all other archaic figurations of the 'return to the absolute beginning'. To repeat, the primordial image of the union of polarities, or conjunction of the opposites, conjugates two main aspects: it synthesizes the basic inner conflict between raw organic instinctuality and the counterposing drive that 'elevates' to dimensions beyond the intellect; it prefigures the empirical embodied process that allows for self-realization. In addition to these aspects, the primordial image of the union of the polarities reveals the dynamics of polarity that presides every cosmic creation, and which is expressed by the polarity between the feminine principle and the masculine principle. And, finally, it is the most primitive way of expressing the paradox of divine reality, which is 'at the same time actual and potential' (Eliade, 1971, p. 419).

This primordial image seems to be recurrent in the work of Sadamasa Motonaga. At the Challenge to the Midsummer Burning Sun, Sadamasa Motonaga presented several plastic bags with coloured water hanging from the branches of the pines. In the following exhibition, three months later, at the Ohara Hall in Tokyo, he hanged clusters of bags with coloured water throughout the building, and a cluster of several stones, painted in different colours, disposed over low plynths. At the Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition he stretched stripes of polythylene containing coloured water to hang between trees, he also lit numerous candle lamps to float in water and operated his smoke rings machine.

At the outdoor exhibitions, the plastic bags or stripes with coloured water, hanging from the pine branches, are suspended between the ground and the sky. As an archaic element, 'supremely fluid' (Eliade, 1971, p. 189), water symbolizes the whole of potentiality, the principle of what is formless and potential, the source of all possible existence, the primal substance from which all forms come and to which they will return:

water is always germinative, containing the potentiality of all forms in their unbroken unity (...) it *precedes* all forms and *upholds* all creation (Eliade, 1971, p. 188).

The work of water is

to precede creation and take it again to itself; it can never get beyond its own mode of existence – it can never express itself *in forms* (Eliade, 1971, p. 212).

Besides, 'since prehistoric times, water, moon and woman were seen as forming the orbit of fertility both for man and for the universe' (Eliade, 1971, p. 212).

The different coloured waters that Motonaga showed, contained in the maleable transparent surfaces of the plastic bags, are perhaps an expression of that permanent potentiality. It is interesting to notice that Motonaga's work, at

this experimental stage, used all the archaic natural elements, water, air, fire, earth (stone) without committing to the creation of permanent form. Later, with his paintings, he used paint as a fluid that spread and fused, the outline of the shapes resulting as a malleable containing limit, like the plastic bags did when holding the water, and sometimes punctured, like the inflatable plastics holding smoke.

Yet, a further understanding of the role of water can be established. At the Ohara Hall in October 1955, Motonaga complemented the suspension of the bags with water with the installation of a cluster of stones, painted in different colours, with small delicate vertical pins glued on the surface: the paintings on the wall also exhibited nearby in the room represented vast masses of earth with delicate vertical trees, explaining the stone as representations of Earth. Seemingly, there is a correlation between the vast proportion of the area for earth in the paintings and the preponderant quality of weight in the stones. For, as Eliade explains, 'above all, stone is', it shows something that transcends the precariousness of humanity, an absolute mode of being; its strength, its motionless, its size and its strange outlines are something other than human (Eliade, 1971, p. 216). Therefore, in the absence of the direct relation with earth that was possible in the outdoor exhibition, the stones take its function in the Ohara Hall, to complete the conjunction between the two opposites: the permanent potentiality and the absolute mode of being.

While the conjunction of the opposites is self-evident in the work of the lamps with candles floating on the water, fire over water, on the work of the smoke rings it appears as a union of the polarities, prefiguring the Yônilingam<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> The Hindu yônî-linga icon, or Yônilingam, combines the female and the male principles through a synthesis of concise representations of the sexual organs of both genders. The Hindu yônî-linga, that also stands for the divine couple Shiva-Shaktî (consciousness-matter), represents

(fig. 55). Projected by a hand-made machine, thick yet delicate smoke rings float through the air, designing residual implicit cylinders. In the Hindu archaic iconography, *yôní*, the ring, is the figuration of the feminine genitals, thus, the feminine principle; it corresponds in the Hindu cosmogony to *prakriti*, which is all created reality, all matter in every dimension of existence. The lingam, or phallus, is the masculine principle, corresponding in the Hindu cosmogony to the *pûrusha*, which is pure consciousness, without attributes and uncreated.

The union of the polarities, let us recall, is also a subtle physiological process, that involves the whole body but is centred on the axis of the vertebral column, along its energetic centres and conduits, in which the *prâna*, or bio-energy, that flows through the two main *nadí*s, the positive, solar, *idá*, and the negative, lunar, *pingalá*, is arrested, igniting the *kundaliní* energy, that ascends from the bottom of the vertebral column, through the *sushumná*, a subtle conduit inside the spine, up to the brain, providing the state of hyper-consciousness or self-knowledge. While any pair of opposites may represent this syndrome, Motonaga's paintings seem to illustrate the process itself. On the canvas, two or three vertical shapes of vivid contrasting paint are spread, sharing areas of fusion suggestive of combustion or ignition, their limits defined when their flow halted, as if contained by maleable transparent surfaces, like the water in the plastic bags, and punctured to fuse with other colours, like the punctures on the giant transparent phallic balloon of smoke that the artist presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Gutai Art Using the Stage, in April 1958 (fig. 56). With variations, his paintings usually show vertical fluid shapes (prefigured on the trees of the first Gutai

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the 'conjunction of the opposites' attained with the rise of this force (*kundaliní*), the extraordinary accomplishment of overpowering duality and transcending profane reality.

paintings at the Ohara Hall in 1955) that fuse in splendour, or otherwise two opposing or even symmetrical areas that fuse through channeling (fig. 57).

IMAGES

CHAPTER III

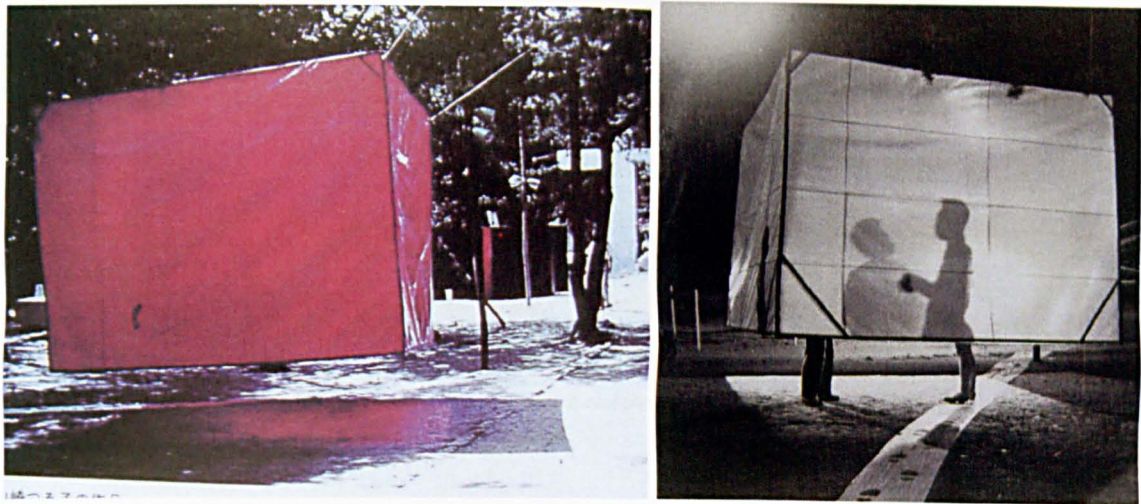


Fig. 1 and 2 – Tsuruko Yamazaki, red structure, *Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition*, 1956 (Gutai, 1993, p. 92).

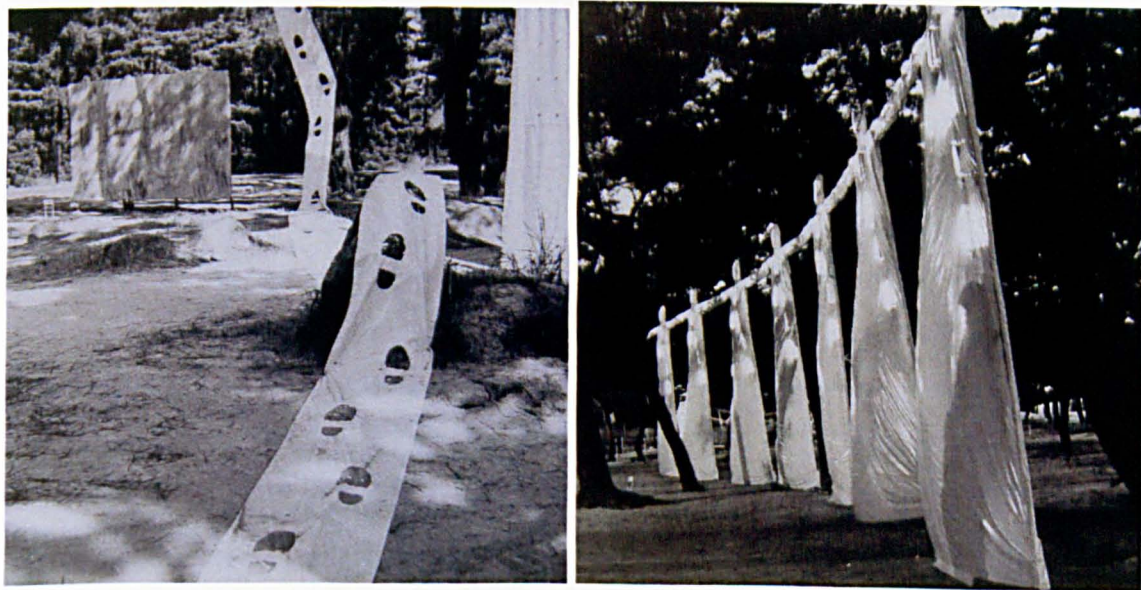


Fig. 3 and 4 – Akira Kanayama, footprints; Atsuko Tanaka, shapes in cloth with electric bulbs, *Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition*, 1956 (Gutai, 1993, p. 93).



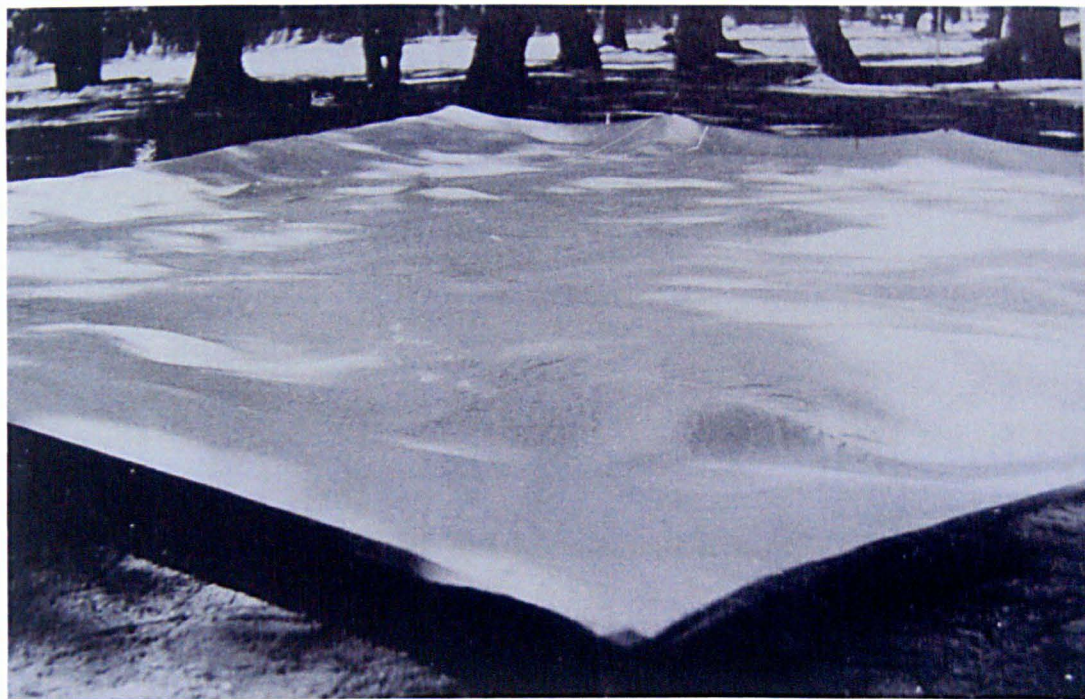


Fig. 5 – Atsuko Tanaka, pink cloth, *Experimental Outdoor Exhibition to Challenge the Midsummer Burning Sun*, 1955 (Gutai, 1993, p. 73).



Fig. 6 – Akira Kanayama, red ball on field, on the same exhibition (Gutai, 1994, p. 71, from the reconstitution of the first outdoor Gutai Art exhibitions at the Ashiya Park, 1994).





Figs. 7

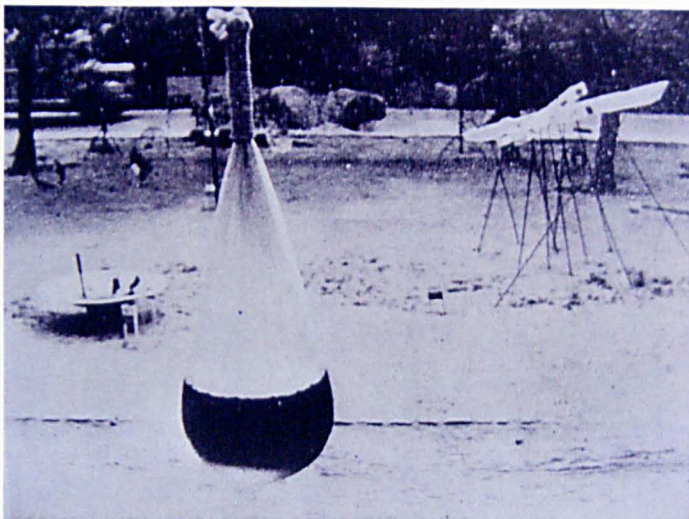


Fig. 8

Fig. 7 and 8 – Tsuruko Yamazaki, tin plates, (Gutai, 1994, p. 57, from the reconstitution of the first outdoor Gutai Art exhibitions at the Ashiya Park, 1994); Sadamasa Motonaga, plastic bag with coloured water. *Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition, 1956* (Gutai, 1993, p. 70)



Fig. 9



Fig. 10

Fig. 9 and 10 – Fujiko Shiraga, split board, *Experimental Outdoor Exhibition to Challenge the Midsummer Burning Sun, 1955* (Gutai, 1993, p. 72); Kazuo Shiraga, *Challenge to the Mud, Ohara Hall roof top, 1st Gutai Art Exhibition, 1955* (Gutai, 1993, p. 79).



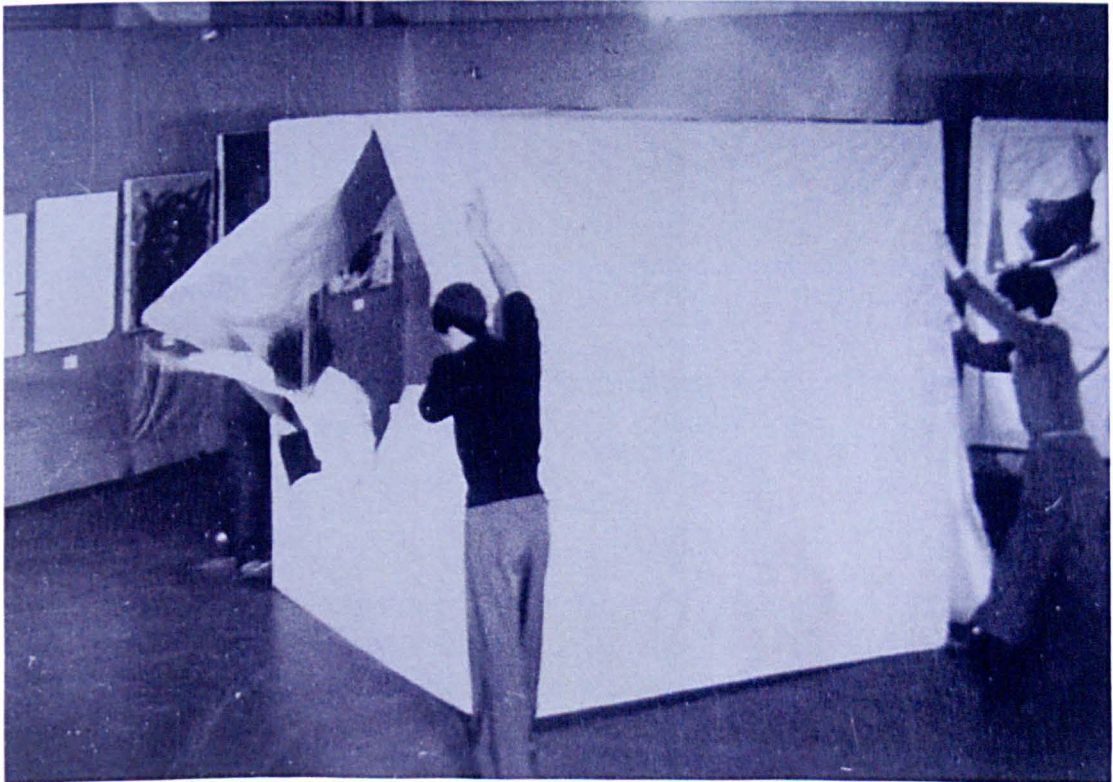


Fig. 11 to 14 – Jiro Yoshihara tearing Saburo Murakami screen paper at the 1<sup>st</sup> *Gutai Art Exhibition* (Gutai, 1993, p. 78); Saburo Murakami screen paper structures, same exhibition (Gutai, 1993, p. 78).



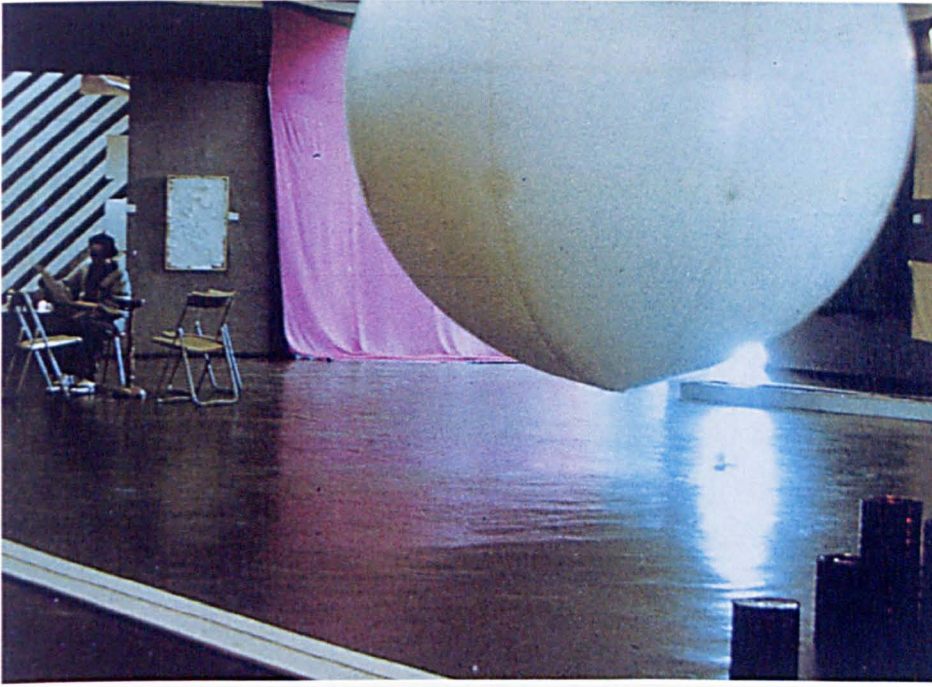


Fig. 15 and 16 – Atsuko Tanaka, pink cloth, Akira Kanayama white balloon, same exhibition (Gutai, 1993, p. 81);  
Sadamasa Motonaga, plastic bags with coloured water, same exhibition (Gutai, 1993, p. 80).



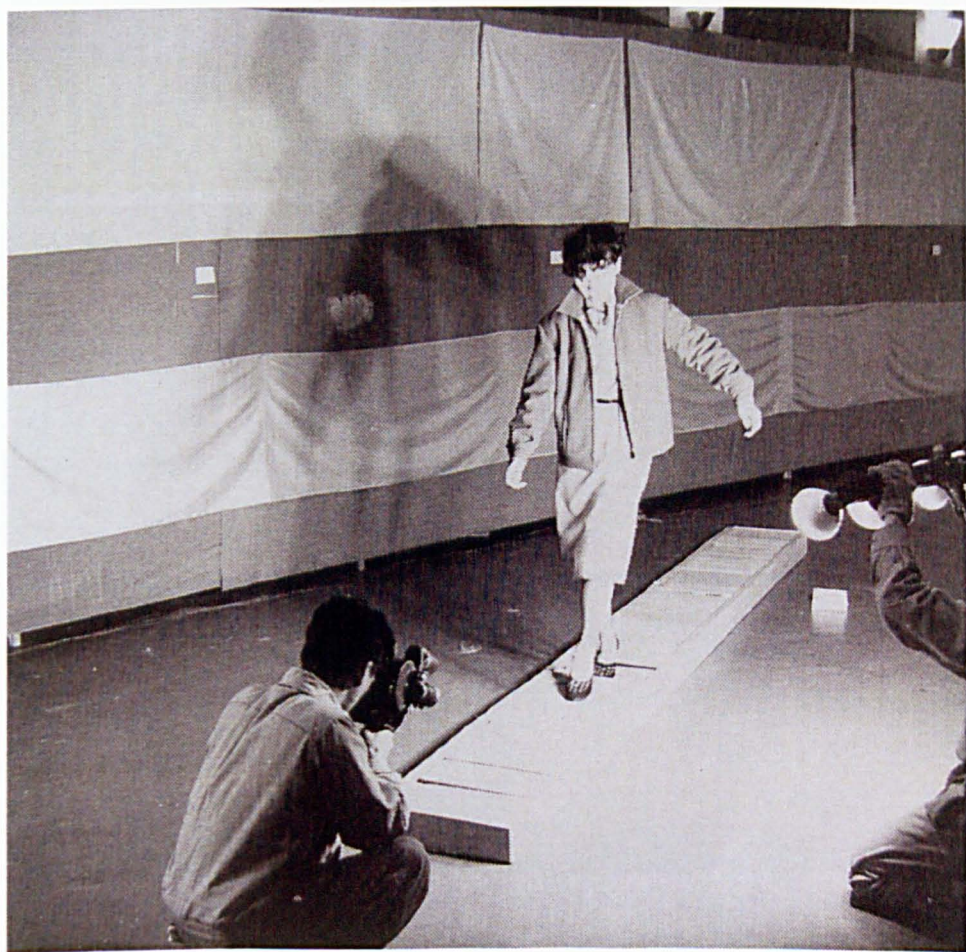
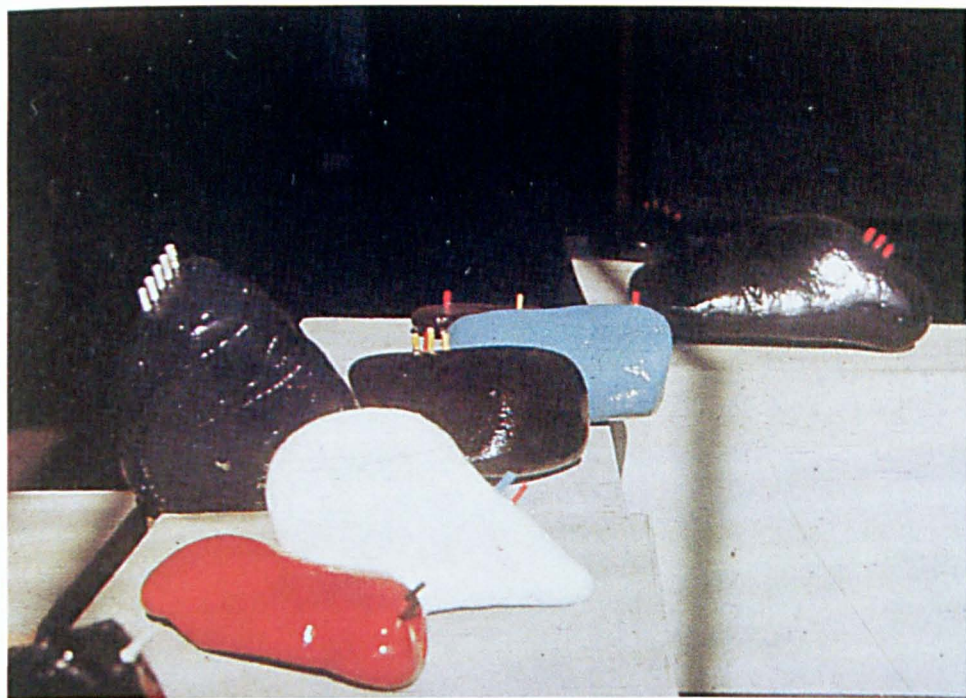


Fig. 17 and 18 – Sadamasa Motonaga, painted stones, same exhibition (Gutai, 1993, p. 80); Shozo Shimamoto, faulty steps to walk on, same exhibition (Gutai, 1993, p. 77).



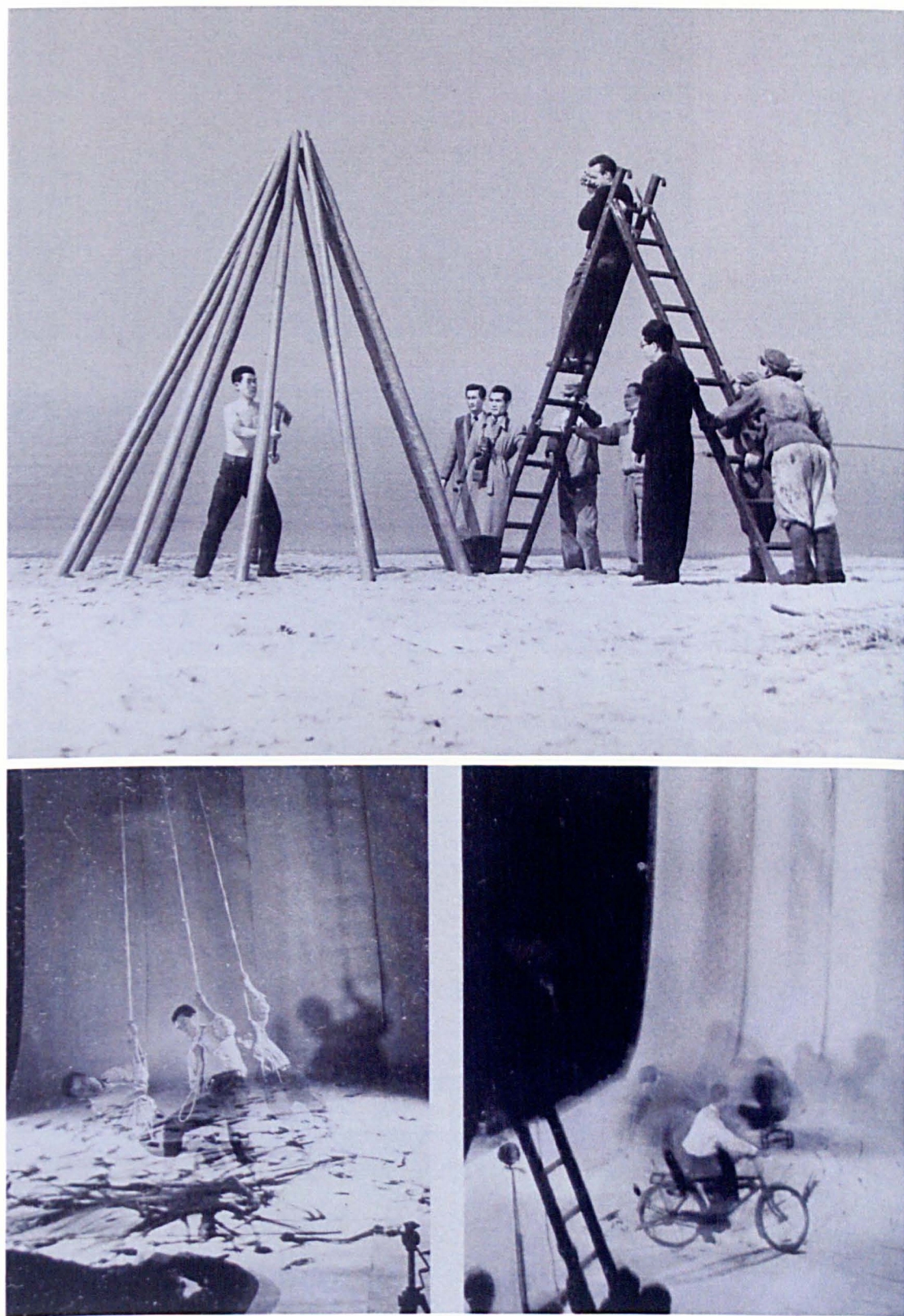


Fig. 19 – Kazuo Shiraga, action with the red logs, painting with the feet and riding a bicycle, at the *One Day Outdoor Exhibition* for Life magazine (Gutai, 1993, p. 86).



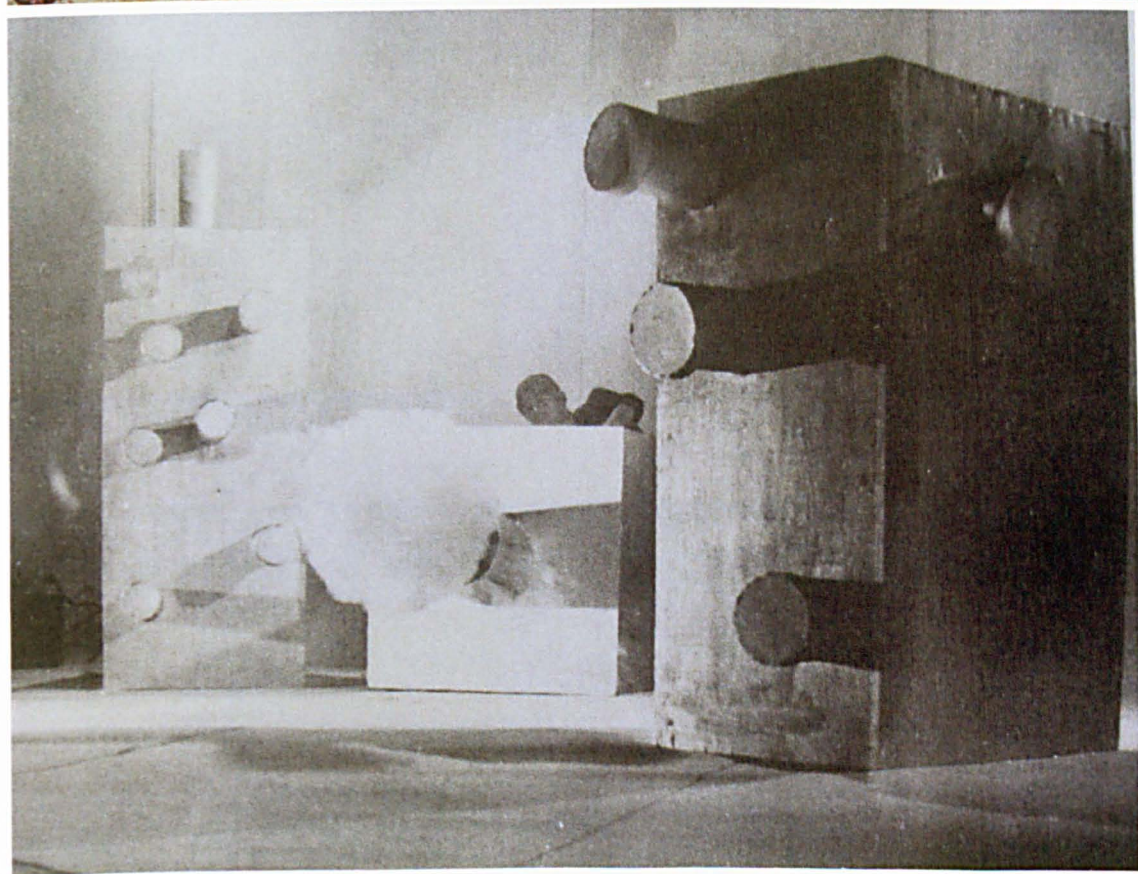


Fig. 20 – Sadamasa Motonaga, plastic bags with coloured water; smoke machine, same event (Gutai, 1993, pp. 85, 87).

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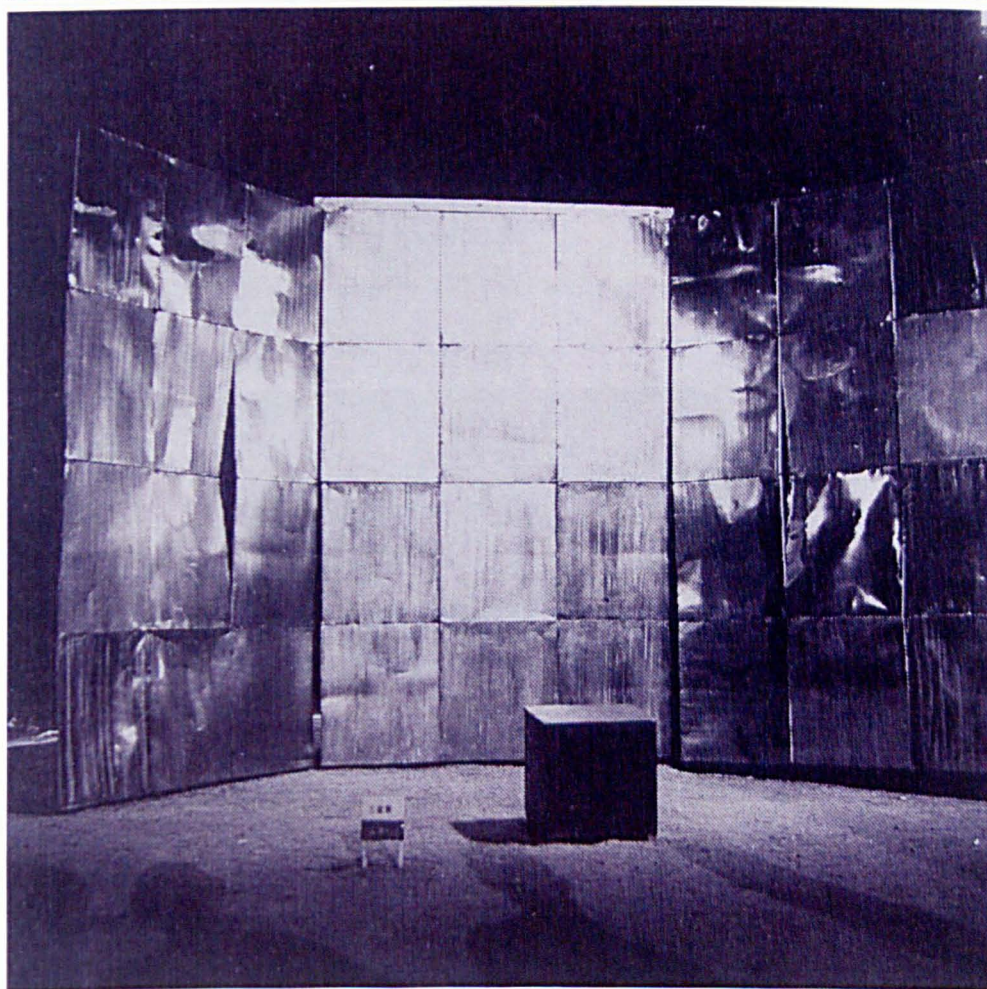
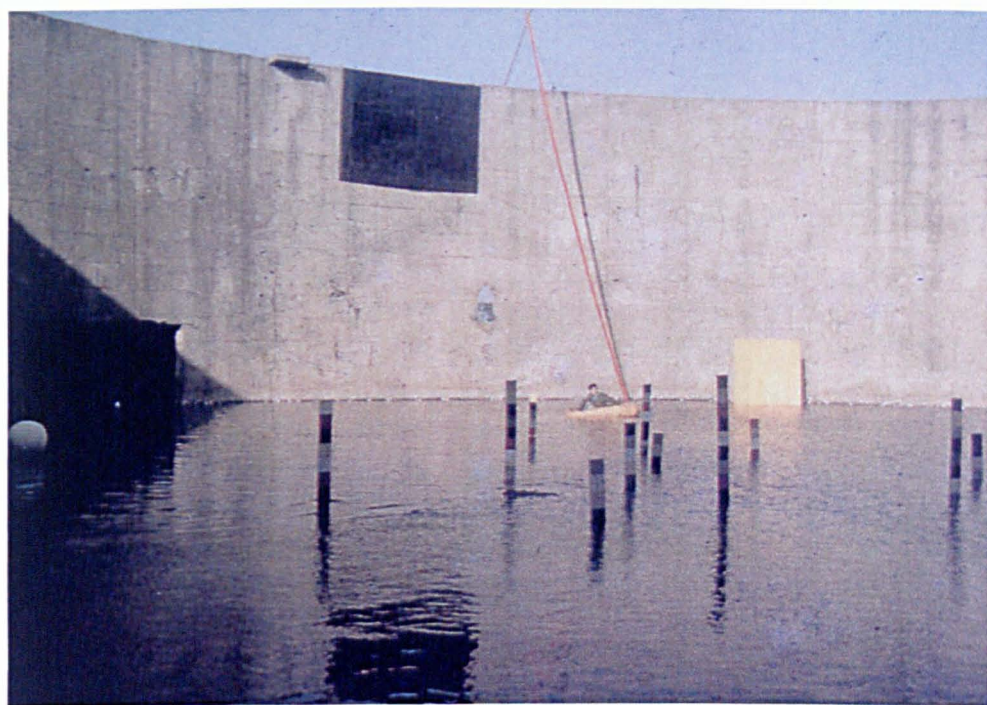


Fig. 22 and 23 – Jiro Yoshihara, floating objects, same event (Gutai, 1993, p. 85); Tsuruko Yamazaki, metal wall, *Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition*, 1956 (Gutai, 1993, p. 92).



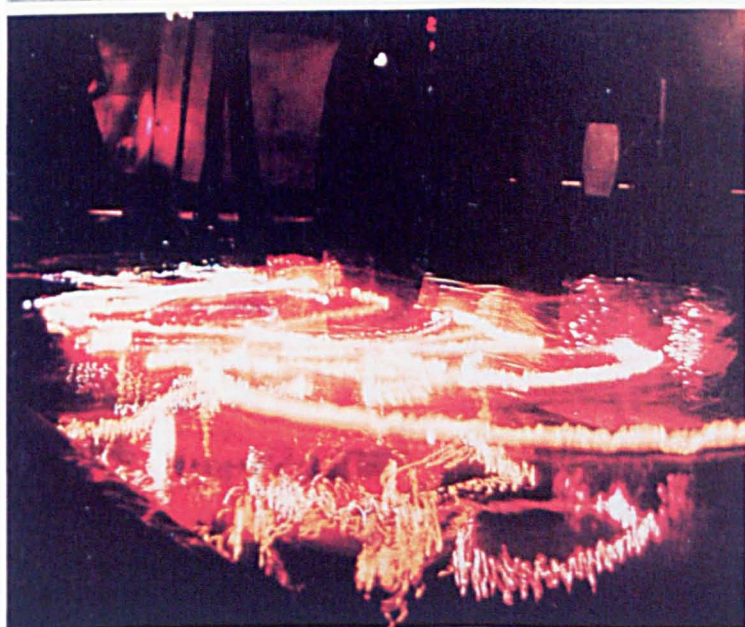
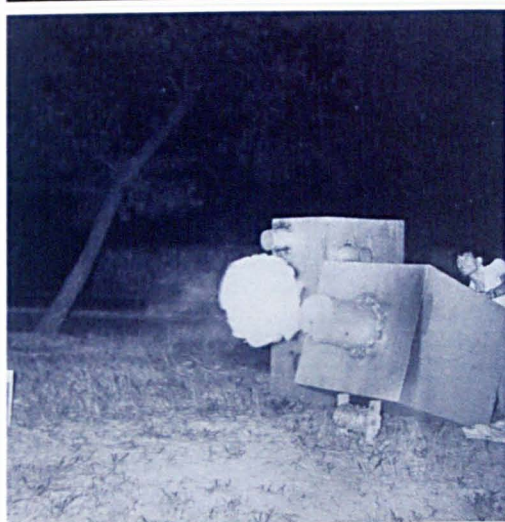
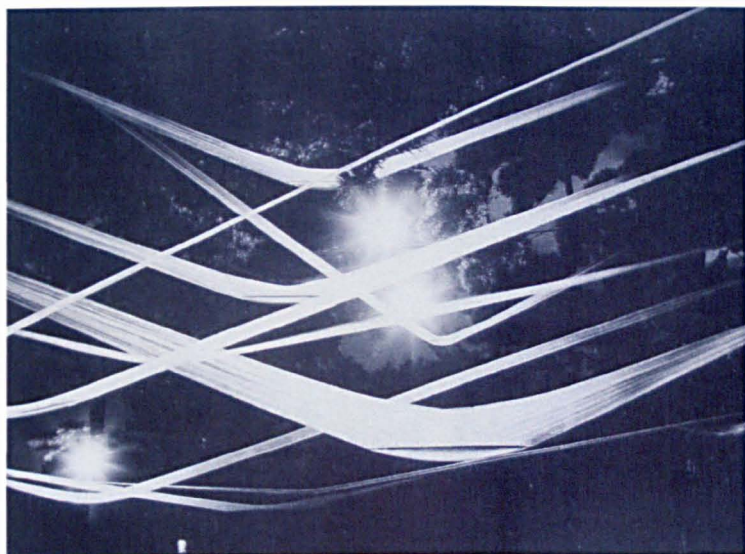


Fig. 24 – Sadamasa Motonaga, plastic stripes with coloured water, smoke rings machine, candles on water, *Outdoor Gutai Art Exhibition*, 1956 (Gutai, 1993, p. 89, 92).



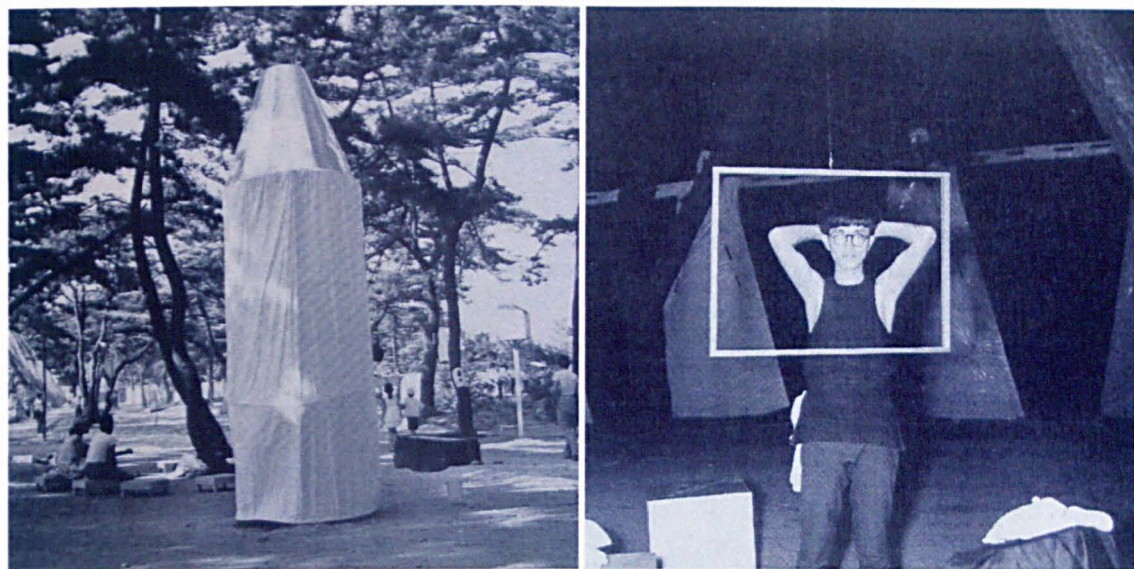


Fig. 25 – Saburo Murakami, sky, empty frame, same event (Gutai, 1993, p. 91).

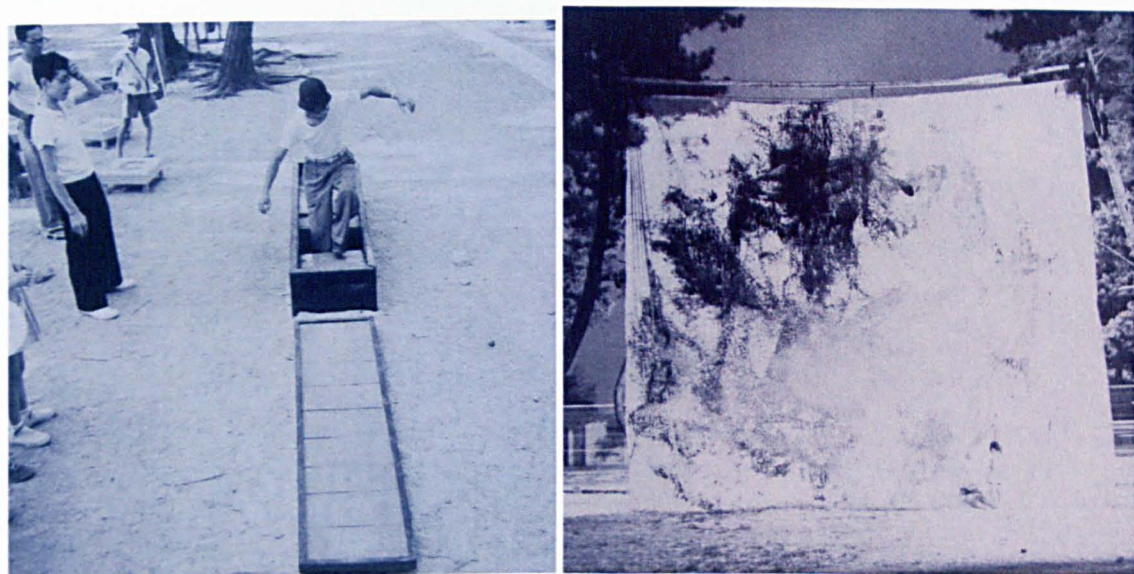


Fig. 26 – Shozo Shimamoto, faulty steps to walk on, paintings with canon, same event (Gutai, 1993, p. 90).





Fig. 27



Fig. 28

Fig. 27 and 28 – Kazuo Shiraga painting with the feet, *2nd Gutai Art Exhibition*, Ohara Hall, Tokyo (Gutai, 1993, p. 97); Sabuto Murakami, passing through screens of paper, same exhibition (Gutai, 1993, p. 97).





Fig. 29 and 30 – Shozo Shimamoto, painting by throwing bottles (Gutai, 1993, p. 97); Akira Kanayama inflatable balloon (Gutai, 1993, p. 96).



Fig. 31 and 32 – Tsuruko Yamazaki, alluminum surface, *3rd Gutai Art Exhibition*, 1957. (Gutai, 1993, p. 107); Jiro Yoshihara at the setting up of the *3rd Gutai Art Exhibition*, Akira Kanayama's paintings on the back wall (Gutai, 1993, p. 106).

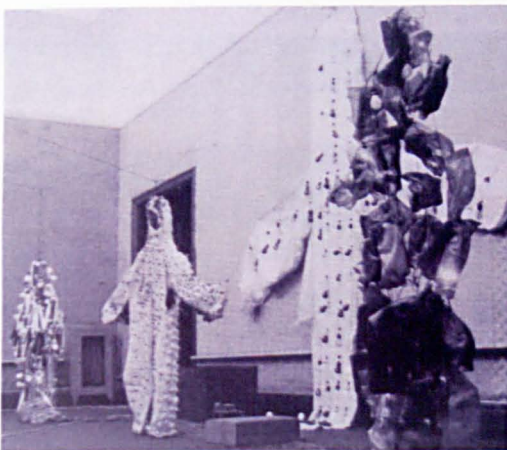


Fig. 33 – Atsuko Tanaka, dresses with electric bulbs, and circuitry drawings, same exhibition (Gutai, 1993, p. 111).



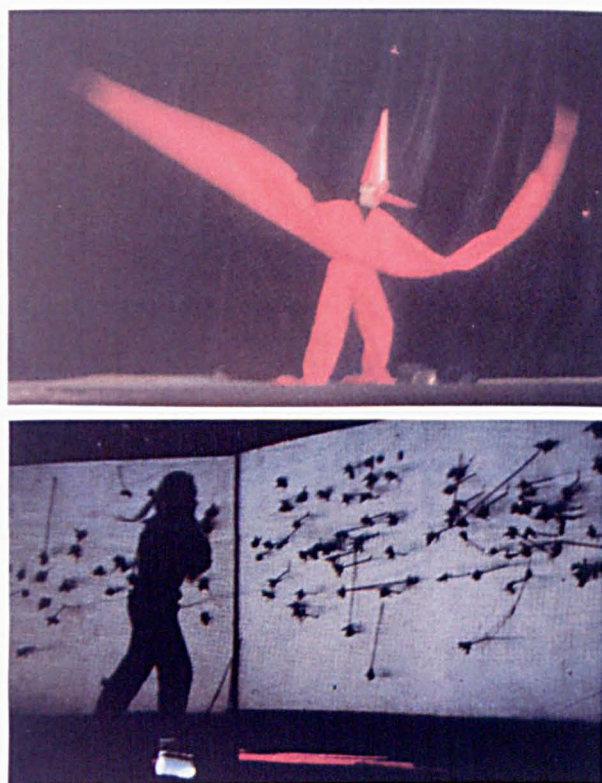


Fig. 34 – Kazuo Shiraga, Sanbaso - Super Modern, *Gutai Art Using the Stage*, 1957 (Gutai, 1993, p. 113).

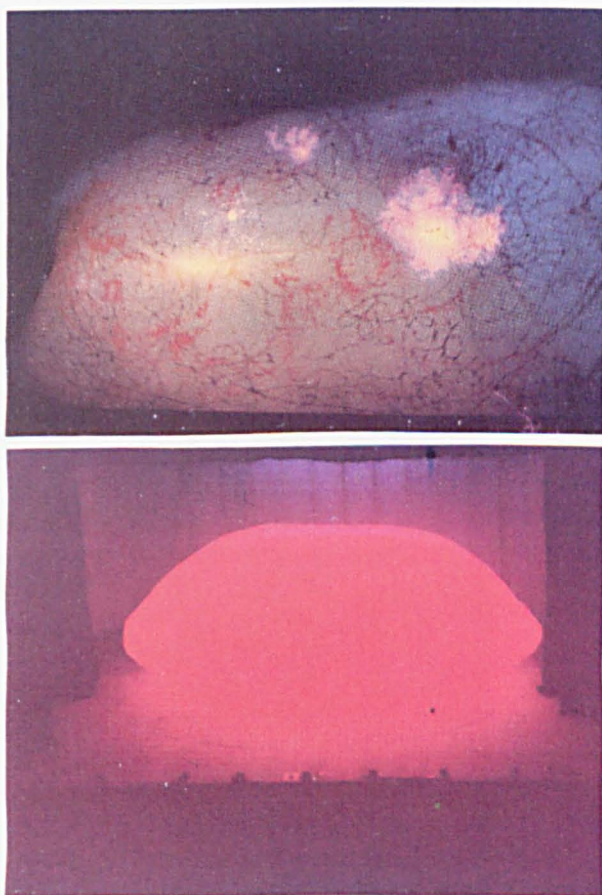


Fig. 35 – Akira Kanayama, inflatable balloon, same exhibition, 1957 (Gutai, 1993, p. 113).

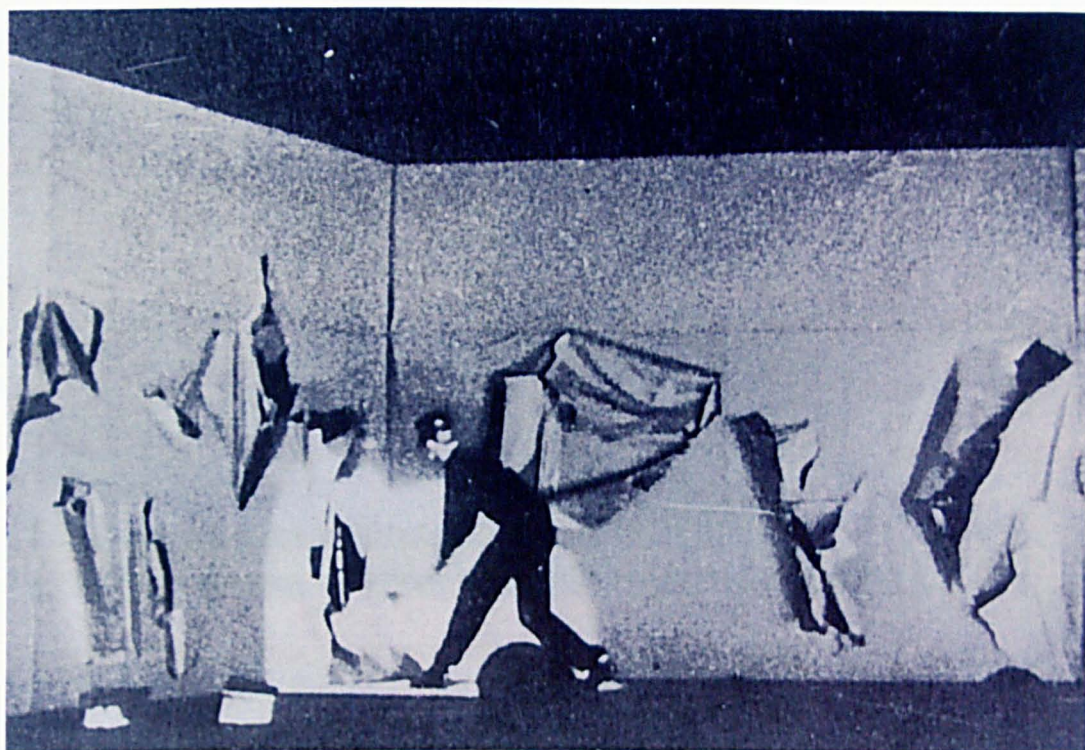


Fig. 36 – Saburo Murakami, passing through screens of paper, same exhibition, 1957 (Gutai, 1993, p. 118).

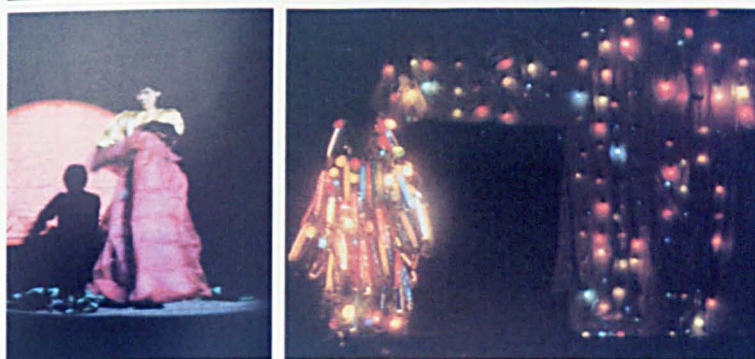
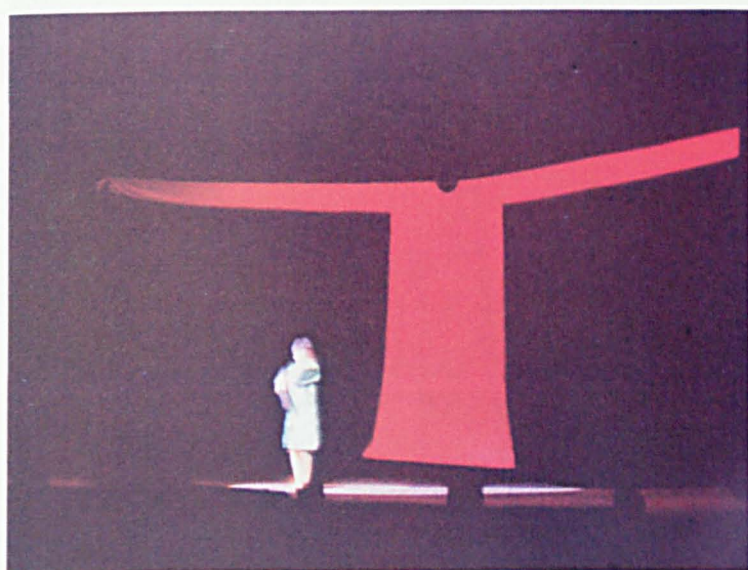


Fig. 37 – Atsuko Tanaka, red dress, stripping, electric dresses, same exhibition, 1957 (Gutai, 1993, p. 116, 117, 119).





Fig. 38 – Sadamasa Motonaga, smoke rings, same exhibition, 1957 (Gutai, 1993, p. 119).

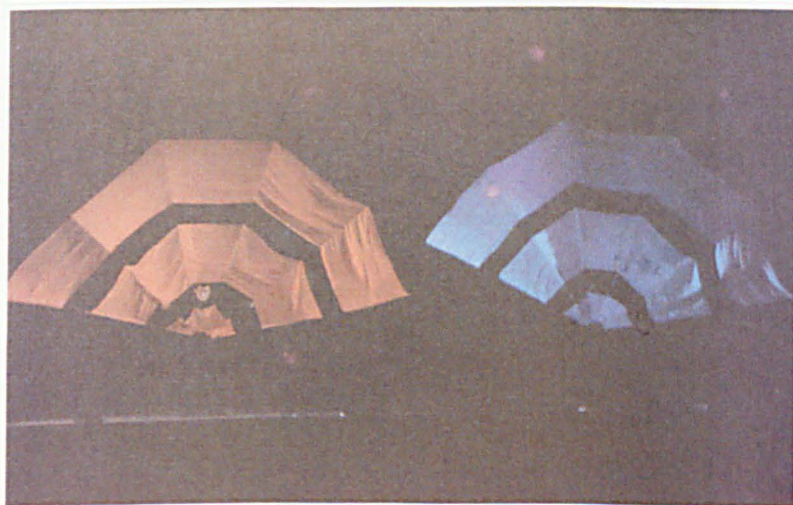
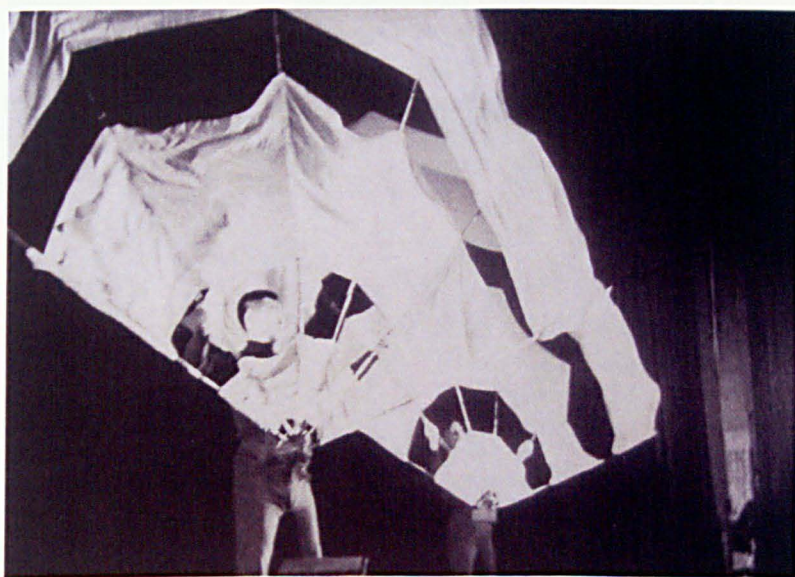


Fig. 39 – Kazuo Shiraga, performing with two fans, *2nd Gutai Art Using the Stage*, 1958 (Gutai, 1993, p. 127, 128).



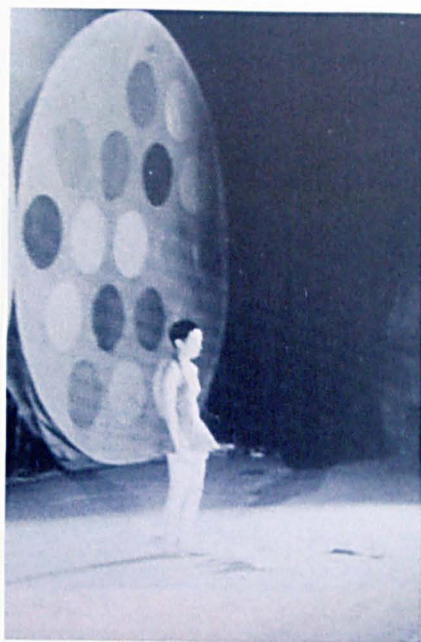
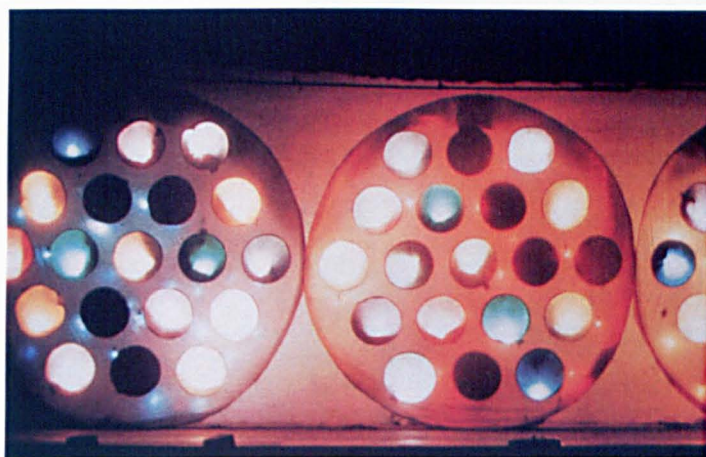


Fig. 40 – Atsuko Tanaka, performance with lights and clothes, same exhibition, 1958 (Gutai, 1993, p. 129, 130).

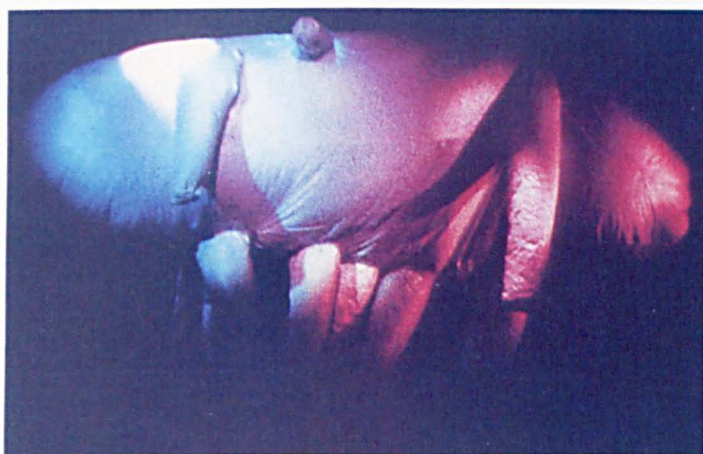


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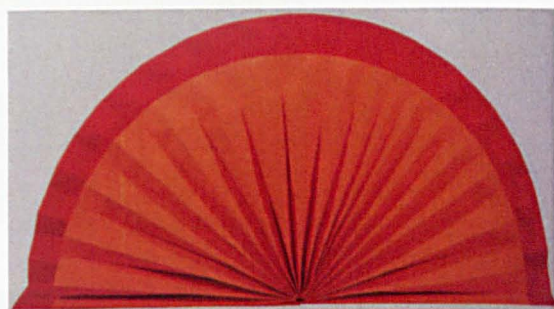


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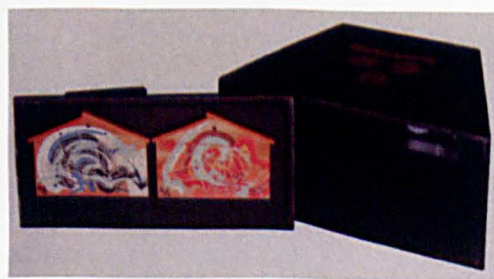
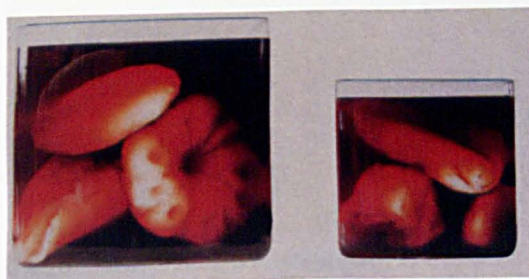


Fig. 44 – Kazuo Shiraga, *Red Liquid*, 1956 (Shiraga, 2003); *Tsuchigumo*, 1964 (Shiraga, 2003).



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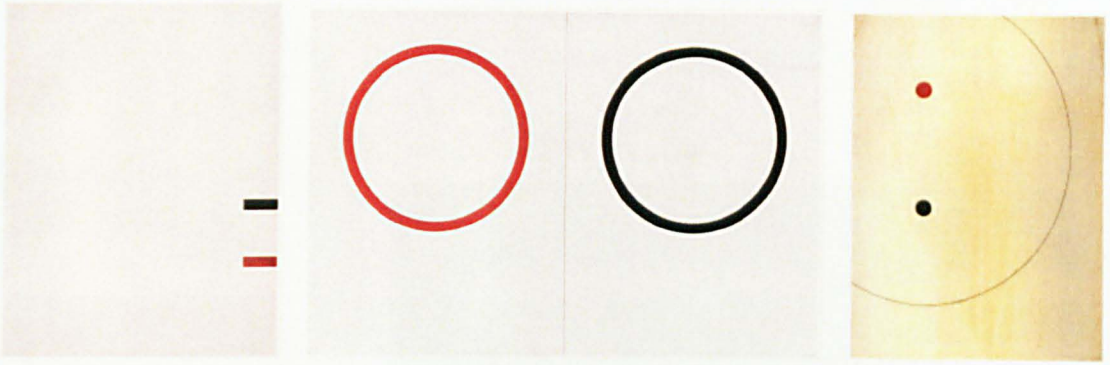


Fig. 46 – Akira Kanayama, *Works*, 1952-54 (Kanayama, 2007, pp. 38, 34, 33).

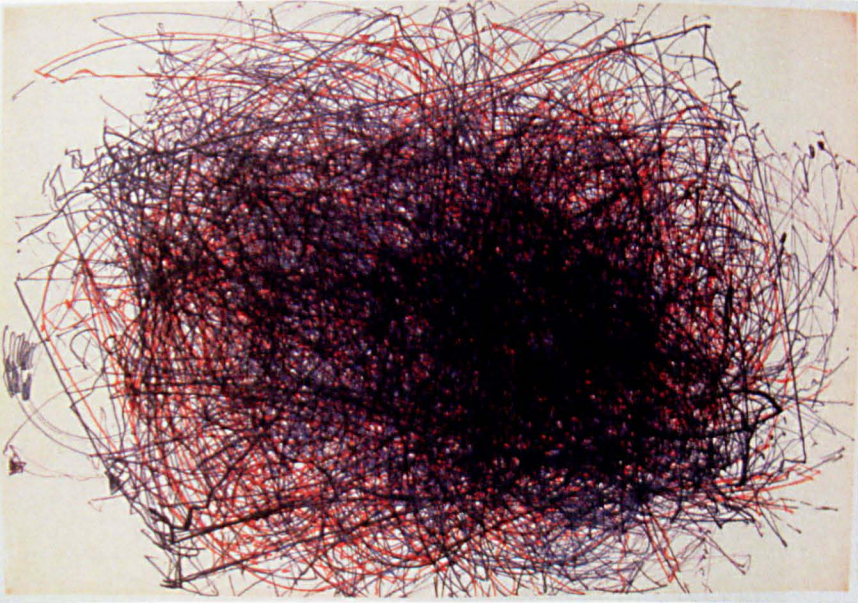
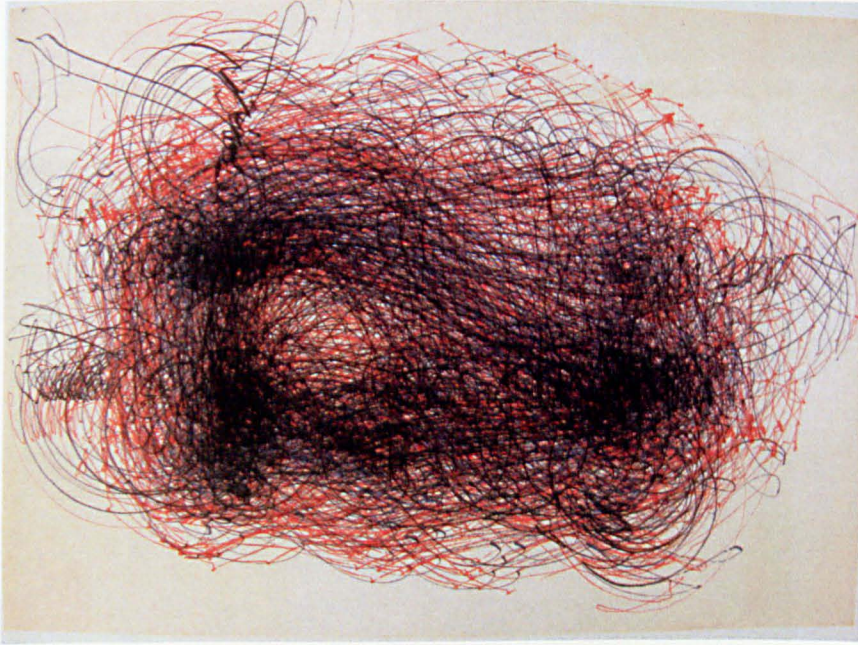


Fig. 47 – Akira Kanayama, *Works*, 1957 (Kanayama, 2007, p. 45).



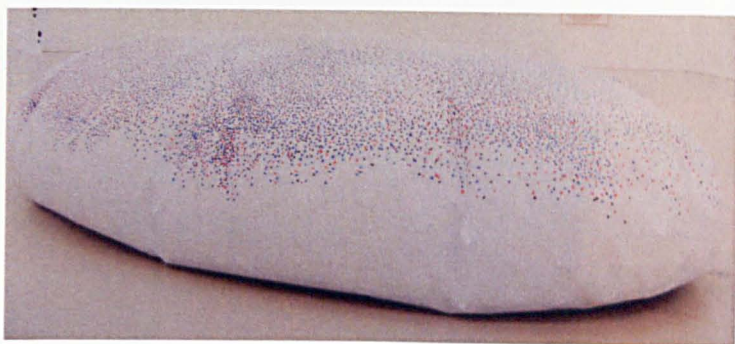
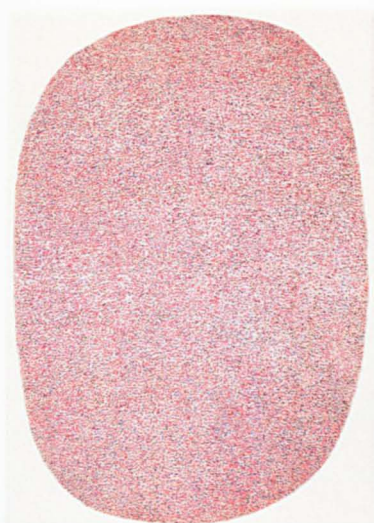


Fig. 48 – Akira Kanayama, *Work*, 1956; *Work*, 1956 (Kanayama, 2007, pp. 44, 42).

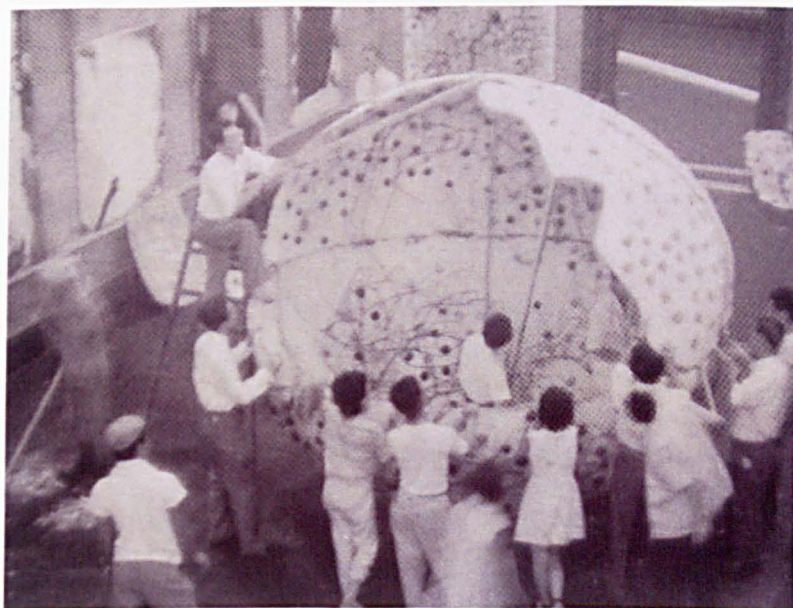
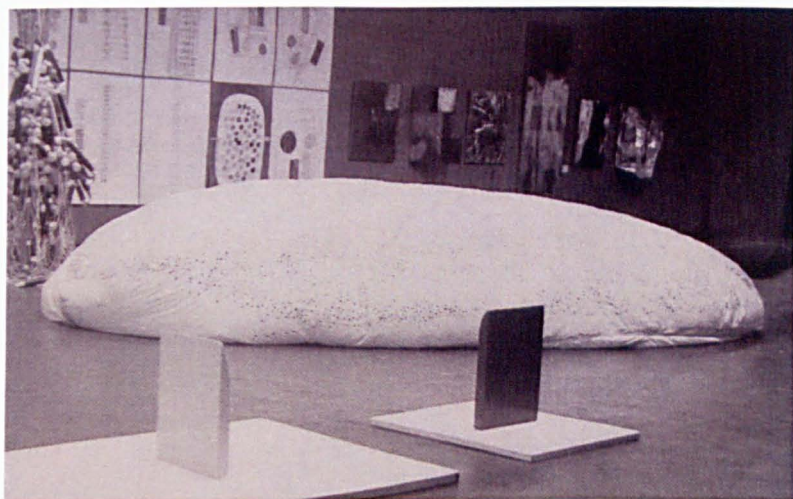


Fig. 49 – Akira Kanayama, *5th Gutai Art Exhibition*, 1958, *8th Gutai Art Exhibition*, 1959 (Gutai, 1993, pp. 98, 138).





Fig. 50 – Kazuo Shiraga, *Work* (with the fingers), 1954, *Work I*, 1958 (Shiraga, 2001).

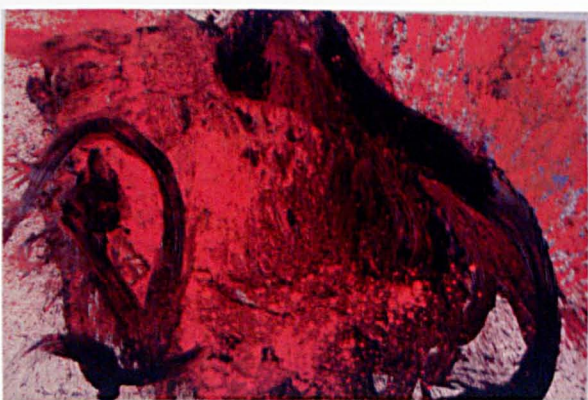


Fig. 51 – Kazuo Shiraga, *Work II*, 1958; *Tenhaisei Katsuenra*, 1963 (Shiraga, 2001).



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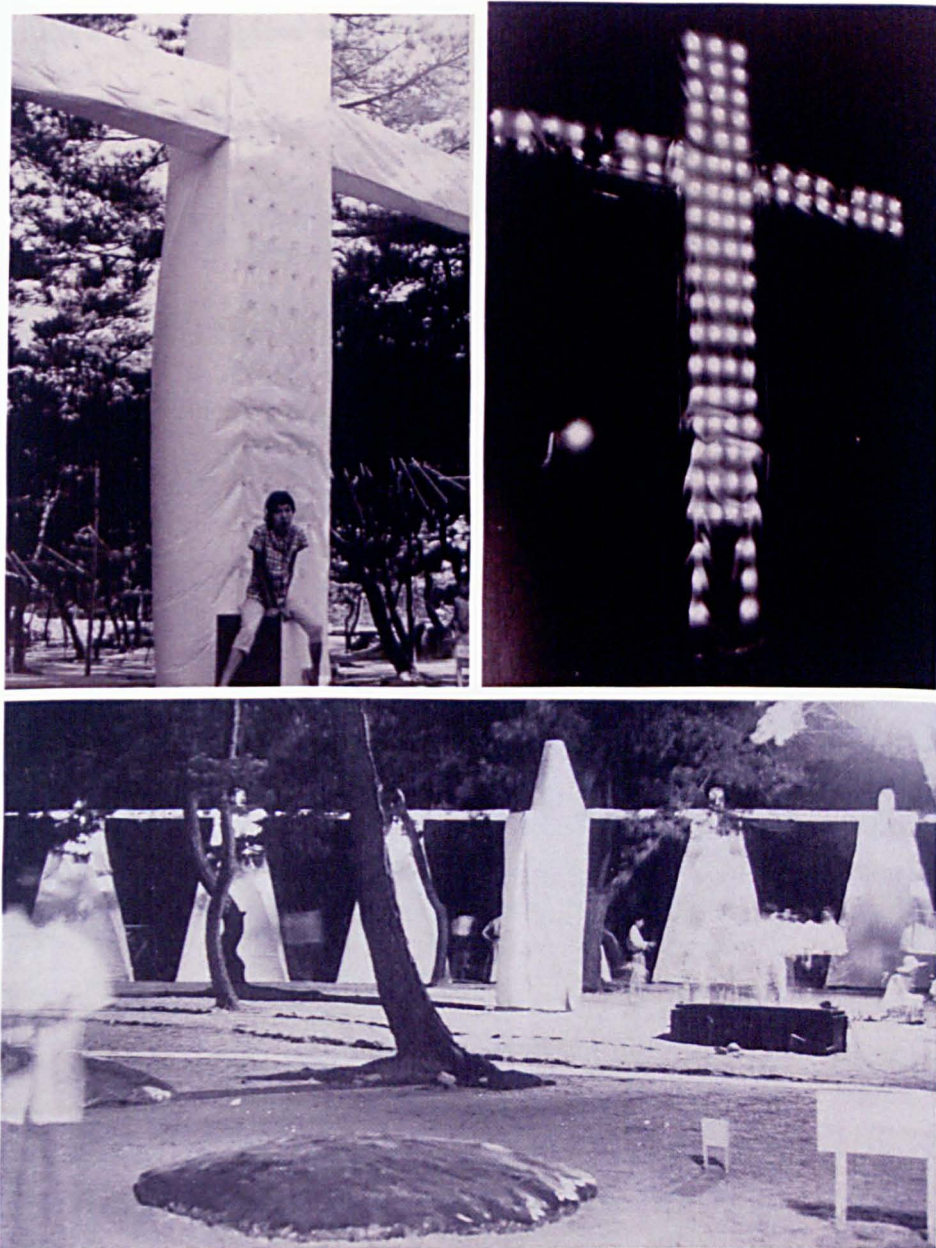


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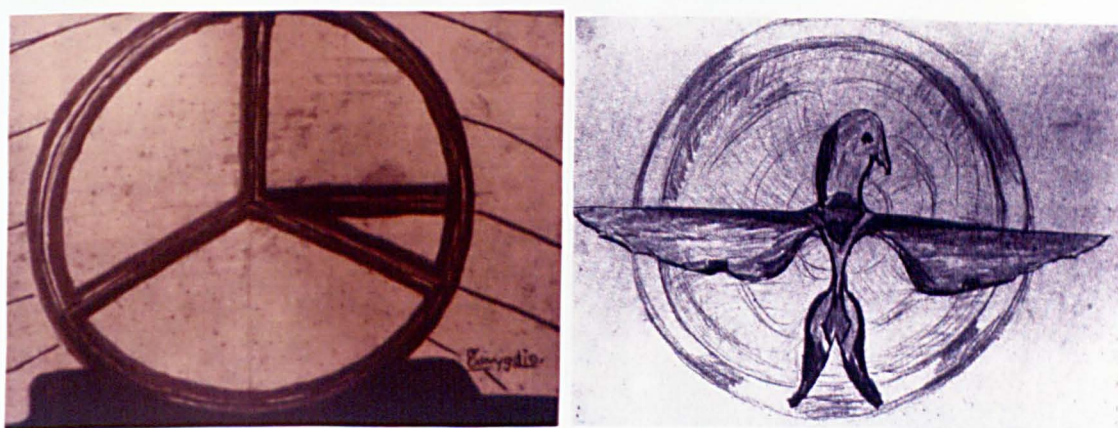


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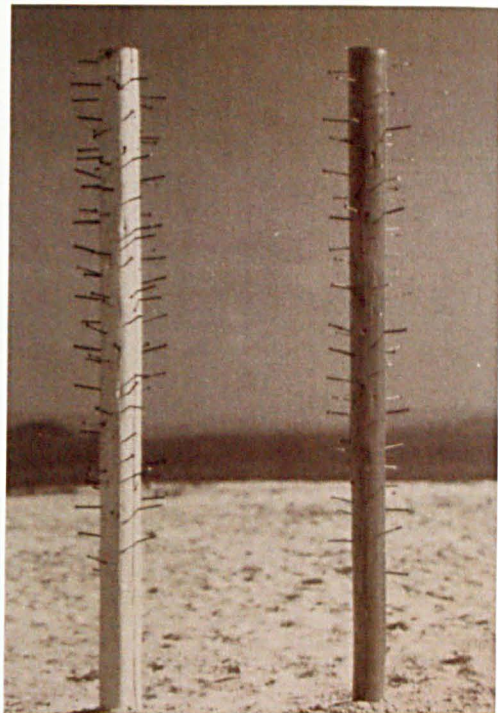


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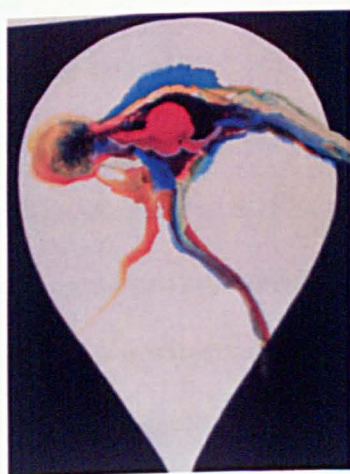
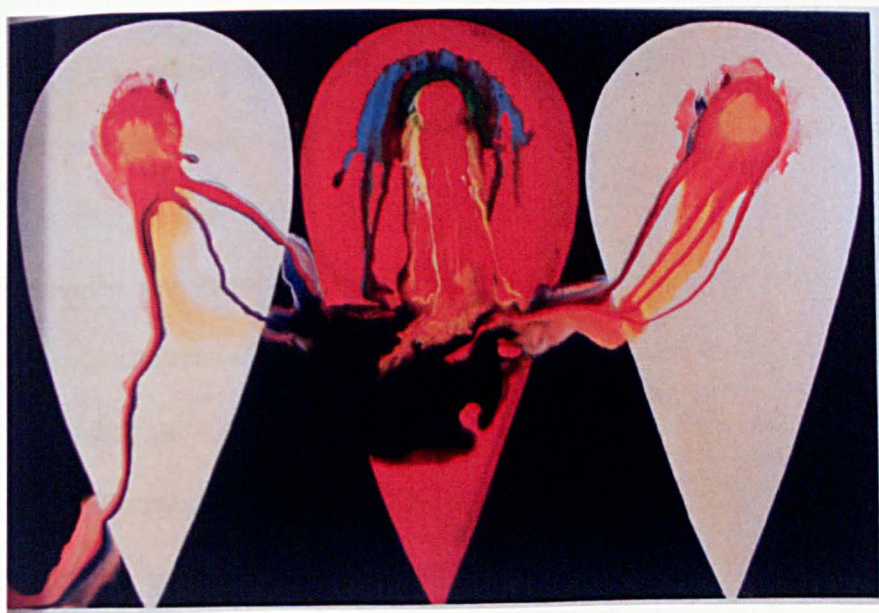


Fig. 57 – Sadamasa Motonaga, *Work*, 1963; *Sacred Fire*, 1964; *Work* 1965; *Work* 1965 (Motonaga, 1989).



## CONCLUSION

The most conspicuous element that results from the analysis of the primordial images in the work of these artists is the incidence of a pattern that converges to the primordial image of 'absolute beginning'. As the research progressed, the type of primordial images that was likely to prefigure the work and practice of the artists became clear, and the straight continuity between them appeared unequivocal. I tried to show not only that the work and practices of these artists evinced images that could be placed under certain categories of primordial images, but also that their images presented a coherent articulation, both within their individual research and, in the case of the Gutai group, also within the collective pursuit.

My reading of the experimental avant-garde endeavour of these artists unraveled some new elements for the understanding of their creative drive and work. In the case of Lygia Clark, the persistence of the image of 'the full-void' expressing the situation of creative accomplishment; the imagery of her psychic crisis in Carboneras as images typical of archaic traditions of initiation of 'medicine men'; and the reading of her final proposition, the *Estruturação do Self*, as a therapeutic setting which allows for the reverse of a symptom into a symbol. In the case of Hélio Oiticica, the relevance of the 'origin myth', whereby an 'exemplary action' prompts not merely every new creation but 'a new order of creation', such as is the case of his *Bólides*; the tendency towards the concrete, as the paradigm assisting the experimental engagement of the body that would mark his environmental experiment of the *Parangolé*; and the enactment of an 'initiatory death' to attain a reorganization of the sense experience, for the understanding of his environments created for the behaviour, such as *Tropicália*

(*Tropicalia*) and *Éden* (*Eden*). In the case of the Gutai artists, the view on Jiro Yoshihara's eagerness for a new aesthetics prompting the physicality of the Gutai artists through the choice of innovative exhibition settings; and his 'extraordinary intuition' in ensuring the enactment of the vital bond between artist, matter and the accomplishment of the creative drive, in coherence with the 'origin myth', placing the Gutai creative enterprise on the very tradition that originated the Japanese performative arts.

Because the driving motivation of these artists was the creation of the new, in a quest that responded to their deepest and truest needs, their whole stance denotes what Jung called the 'teleological directness of everything psychic' (Jung, 1999, p. 3). The 'nostalgia of the primitive man' (Figueiredo, 1986, pp. 99-100) that Hélio Oiticica alluded to, Lygia Clark's *Longing for the Body*, or the 'something of the order of creation' (Junji, 1999, p. 171) that Jiro Yoshihara looked for in the work of art, are contextual verbal formulations that express their common, persistent and unchanging intent to retrieve an unconditioned situation in which an original creative command could be accomplished.

The primordial images that emerge from their work show that, intrinsic to this situation, resides an archaic embodied knowledge that, despite remaining largely unconscious, is consistently evinced and builds the 'enigmatic purposefulness' and the sheer vitality of the work itself. The recurrent image of the conjunction of the opposites, or union of the polarities, belonging to the pattern of primordial images of 'restoration of the creative time' or 'return to the original time', is an explicit reminder of the psycho-physiology of that inner potency for emancipation, the ascension of the *kundalini* energy, a concrete empirical process that the proto-historical peoples of India mastered since before 3000 B.C., 5000 years ago.

The main purpose of this research was to verify that the archaic makes the avant-garde: at the cutting edge of artistic production, in the pursuit of a new order of creation, underlying the radical practices and works of the experimental avant-garde, rests an embodied knowledge, albeit unconscious, a psycho-physiological device to attain a cosmicized atemporal mode of being, to attain the condition of 'absolute beginning' that the avant-garde extols for creation. And, even if this psycho-physiological process is not empirically accomplished, nor even consciously realized, its projection seems to encompass an empowering, generative effect.

In the poignant writings of Lygia Clark reporting the crisis of Carboneras and her engulfment in a three day long hallucinatory state, it is possible to infer that epiphenomena related with the syndrome of the ascension of the *kundalini* were taking place, from the symptomatic reference to the 'inner heat' to the dramatic change in the sense experience. Other than this, the deflagration of a psychotic crisis that develops into a schizophrenic condition is sometimes announced by the 'illumination' typical of the *kundalini* syndrome, as in the exemplary case of one of Silveira's patients, Carlos Pertuis: 'One morning, sunlight rays fell on the small mirror in his room: an extraordinary brilliance that dazzled him and, before his eyes, a cosmic vision appeared – "God's planetary", according to his words. He cried out, called his family, he wanted everyone to see the wonder he was seeing. He was taken into the hospital that day' (Mello, 2005, p. 63).

However involuntary and unconscious – and therefore catastrophic – an episode of 'ignition' may appear, it is also structurally soteriological (salvational), regenerative. It is an ultimate attempt to keep the full parity of opposing forces within the psyche, and a distressingly genuine one, for it is an extremely radical

and archaic response to the pressures exerted upon the psyche. And, however unsuccessful it may seem when, as a result, it indefinitely entraps the subject in oblivion and apparent chaos, this condition is also striking as a form of self-sacrifice destined to avoid the capitulation of a vital instinctual force, a preponderant stream of psychic energy or libido, under the domineering power of its opposite counterforce. Seemingly, it ultimately comes forth as an innermost life keeping resource, a dramatic solution for keeping the integrity of the psyche.

The whole constellation of primordial images pointing to the situation of 'absolute beginning' speaks mainly of the integrity of the psyche. The act of creation, foundational, accomplishes the return from chaos into a new identity, made possible through the cohesion of the relationship between body and matter, the ludic engagement that provides the power of enactment and, on the more elementary level of therapy, the 'start of will' or the outwardly return of libido, as well as, eventually, the formation of symbols that resumes the process of individuation. Seemingly, it is this very primal bond between artist, matter and creative drive that makes it possible to cumulatively experience the creative potency, exert the creative command and re-enact the original creation, in the extreme vitality that absolutely prevents 'expressions of inhuman character', words that Koichi Kawasaki used to describe the 'filter of Yoshihara's aesthetic' in the Gutai group practice and work (Kawasaki, 2002, p. 149).

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## ANNEXES

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#### 1. THE NEOCONCRETE MANIFEST

... We propose a reinterpretation of neoplasticism, of constructivism and the other similar movements, on the basis of their achievement on expression and on giving prevalence to the work over the theory. (...) from the point of view of aesthetics, the interest of the work begins exactly on what it bears that transcends those external approaches [from the scientific instruments to objective thought]: the universe of existential significance that it founds and reveals at the same time. (...) We do not conceive the work of art neither as a 'machine' nor as an 'object', but as a *quasi-corpus*, that is, a being whose reality is not finished on the external relations of its elements; a being that, while decomposable in parts through analysis, will only fully give in to the direct, phenomenological approach. (...) since the work creates in itself a tacit significance (M. Ponty) that emerges for the first time on the work itself. (...) Avoiding the intuitive creation, limited to an objective body in an objective space, the rationalist concrete artist, with his paintings, only demands from himself and from the spectator a reaction of stimulus and reflex: he speaks to the eye as an instrument and not to the eye as a human mode of having the world and of giving oneself to the world; he speaks to the eye-machine and not to the eye-body. Because the work of art transcends the mechanical space, the notions of cause and effect lose any validity, and the notions of time, space, form, colour, are integrated in such a way – even by the fact that, as notions, they did not pre-exist the work of art – that it would be impossible to talk of them as decomposable terms. Neo-concrete art, stating the absolute integration of those elements (...) on the language of art, the so called geometric forms lose the objective character of geometry to become vehicles of the imagination (...) the spacialization of the work is the fact that it is always becoming present, always restarting the impulse that generated it and of which it was, in itself, already the origin. And if this description likewise sends us to

the primary experience – full – of the real, it is that the neo-concrete art intends nothing more than to relight that experience.

Rio, March 1959

#### MANIFESTO NEOCONCRETO (Brito, 1999, pp. 10-11)

... Propomos uma reinterpretação do neoplasticismo, do construtivismo e dos demais movimentos afins, na base de suas conquistas de expressão e dando prevalência à obra sobre a teoria. (...) do ponto de vista estético a obra começa a interessar precisamente pelo que nela há que transcende essas aproximações exteriores: pelo universo de significações existenciais que ela a um tempo funda e revela. (...) Não concebemos a obra de arte nem como 'máquina' nem como 'objeto', mas como um *quasi-corpus*, isto é, um ser cuja realidade não se esgota nas relações exteriores de seus elementos; um ser que, decomponível em partes, pela análise, só se dá plenamente à abordagem direta, fenomenológica. (...) e por criar para si uma significação tácita (M. Ponty) que emerge nela pela primeira vez. (...) Furtando-se à criação intuitiva, reduzindo-se a um corpo objetivo num espaço objetivo, o artista concreto racionalista, com seus quadros, apenas solicita de si e do espetador uma reação de estímulo e reflexo: fala ao olho como instrumento e não ao olho como um modo humano de ter o mundo e de se dar a ele; fala ao olho-máquina e não ao olho-corpo. É porque a obra de arte transcende o espaço mecânico que, nela, as noções de causa e efeito perdem qualquer validade, e as noções de tempo, espaço, forma, cor, estão de tal modo integradas – pelo fato mesmo de que não pré-existiam, como noções, à obra – que seria impossível falar delas como termos decomponíveis. A arte neoconcreta, afirmando a integração absoluta desses elementos (...) na linguagem da arte, as formas ditas geométricas perdem o caráter objetivo da geometria para se fazerem veículo da imaginação (...) Entenda-se por espacialização da obra o fato de que ela está sempre se fazendo presente, está sempre recomendo o impulso que a gerou e de que ela era já a origem. E se essa descrição nos remete igualmente à experiência primeira – plena – do real, é que a arte neoconcreta não pretende nada menos do que reacender essa experiência.

#### 2. THE FULL-VOID (1960)

(Originally published in *Jornal do Brasil*, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1960. Rio de Janeiro. Sunday Supplement. p. 5)

Art, for me, is valid only in the ethical-religious sense, connected to the internal elaboration of the artist in its most profound sense, which is the *existential*. All of my vision is not purely optical but is viscerally connected to my life-experience of feeling, not only in the immediate sense but, even more so, in a deep sense of which we do not know the origin. Whatever a form may express has only one sense, for me, in straight relation with its inner space, *full-void* of its own existence, as much as we have our own which

completes itself and gains sense as maturity arrives. I sometimes think that, before we are born, we are like a closed wrist that opens the first finger when we are born and open internally as the petals of a flower, as we find the sense of our existence, and at a given moment we are conscious of that plenitude of a full-void (inner time). On that instant we attain an ethical-religious conception that is contrary to the existence of a God outside of us: he is inside of us and is the best we have: the idea of life and death abandons us and those two polarities cease to exist. What we are capable of transmitting in a work of art is nothing more than a moment of inertia within the cosmological dynamics, which *we come from* and to which *we will return*. It is a flash of this infinite materialized in the finite. As an arrest in time. It is a piece of eternity. Man goes in search of his inner time and when he finds it, he experiences his own origin. It is at that moment that he goes beyond the life-death frontier. The anguish of external time (one day after the other) that is connected with the same existential anguish (the reason of things in relation to him) vanishes, for there he begins to abstract that external reality. It exists, however he is no longer invaded by it in the practical mechanical sense. Reality and him become one thing only, in its deep existential sense. Reality becomes a support for meditation or a magnetic field where he, the artist, identifies himself with time. The beginning *life* and the end *death* are over. The work of art is the materialization of this fusion. That is what makes it *eternal* or transcendent. The less creative people will feel, through the work of the artist, that *moment* as an answer to a question of universal sense. Life exists only in relation to polarities. It is there that the relation between art and life begins. In art, we go in search of the void (from which we came) and, when we find it ascribed with *value*, we find our inner time. The acceptance of life (contradictory dynamics), the silence and the non-formulation gain significance as the full and the formulation. It is the situation of man in his space – the beginning of the inner accomplishment: maturity. It is the cut with old situation in which the individual existed only in relation-function with them. Man is not alone. He is form and void. He comes from the void to form (life) and leaves the latter into the full-void of what a relative *death* might be. In order to attain this state of plenitude it is necessary to relive all the former experiences, face them – which means liberation. There he reaches a state of ethics in the highest sense. While the void remains unbound from the other side (life) it is necessary to lean over it, as an abyss, and experience in it Nothingness, Death, lack of meaning. Every man feels this inner state. The artist, through his work shows him this *slice of eternity*. It is a profoundly religious message, in the highest ethical sense, ascribing value to this sense of the non-significant void. Forms as well as all things express more than their simple physical presence (measure and weight). It is as if each thing radiated energy joining up with the energy of the real living space. When an object is placed in a space that is too big in relation to that object, the space does not cease to be empty and dead, but when this object finds its space, then the space that surrounds it is full. If the object is placed too close to other objects, I feel two contradictory forces clashing with each other. Man has this radiation bigger than that of any object and of

the other animals. It is as if, because he is vertical, he is less set on earth than the other animals.

Therefore, his search for transcendence counterposes that polarity (earth-space) with the stubbornness and the intensity of a privileged being, terribly anguished, always being thrown upwards, bound by the feet, by the organic side of his animal origin. When the rectangle is burst and its surface is virtually inverted, the latter no longer being the thickness of space and becoming the thread of space, that expression already happens within that real space where all the radiating, living and cosmological forces act. The expression is immediately identified with that radiation organics-man, inside the same real dynamics. (...) While science conquers one side, it is essential that man conquers his own inner time becoming conscious of that ethical-religious sense so that it doesn't get lost or destroyed.

O VAZIO-PLENO (Clark, 1997, pp. 111-113)

Arte, para mim, só é válida no sentido ético-religioso, ligado internamente à elaboração interior do artista no seu sentido mais profundo, que é o *existencial*. Toda a minha visão não é puramente ótica mas está visceralmente ligada à minha vivência do sentir, não somente no sentido imediato, mas, mais ainda, no sentido profundo que não se sabe onde está a sua origem. O que uma forma pode expressar só tem sentido, para mim, em relação estreita com seu espaço interior, *vazio-pleno* da sua existência, assim como existe o nosso que vai se completando e tomando sentido à medida que a maturidade chega. Às vezes, penso que, antes de nascermos, somos como um punho fechado que abre o primeiro dedo quando nascemos e vai se abrindo interiormente como pétalas de uma flor, à medida que achamos o sentido da nossa existência, para num determinado momento termos consciência dessa plenitude de um vazio-pleno (tempo interior). Nesse instante atingimos uma concepção ético-religiosa que contraria toda a existência de um Deus fora da gente: ele está dentro de nós e é o que de melhor temos: a ideia de vida e morte nos abandona já não existem essas duas polaridades. O que conseguimos transmitir numa obra de arte não é mais do que um momento de estática dentro da dinâmica cosmológica de *onde viemos* e para *onde iremos*. É um *flash* deste infinito materializado no finito. Como se fosse uma parada no tempo. É um pedaço de *eternidade*. O homem busca o seu tempo interior e quando o encontra encontra, ele já vivencia toda sua origem. É nesse momento que ele ultrapassa a fronteira vida-morte. A angústia do tempo exterior (um dia após o outro) que está relacionado com a mesma angústia existencial (o porquê das coisas em relação a ele) desaparece, pois ele começa aí a abstrair essa realidade exterior. Ela existe, porém ele não é mais invadido por ela no sentido prático-mecânico. Ele e ela passam a ser uma coisa só, no seu profundo sentido existencial. A realidade passa a ser um suporte de meditação ou um campo magnético onde ele, artista, se identifica com os tempos. Nesse momento, ele percorre toda a sua origem. Acabou o princípio *vida* e o fim *morte*. A obra de arte é a materialização desta fusão. É o que a faz *eterna* ou transcendente. Outros menos criativos sentirão, através da obra do artista, esse *momento* como resposta a uma pergunta de sentido universal. A

vida só existe em relação às polaridades. Aí começa a relação entre vida e arte. Na arte, buscamos o vazio (de onde viemos) e quando o descobrimos *valorizado* é que descobrimos o nosso tempo interior. A aceitação da vida (dinâmica contraditória), o silêncio e a não-formulação passaram a ter significação como o cheio e a formulação. É o olhar para dentro de si. É a situação do homem no seu espaço – o começo da realização interior: maturidade. É o corte de situações antigas em que o indivíduo só existia em relação-função a elas. O homem não está só. Ele é a forma e o vazio. Vem do vazio para a forma (vida) e sai desta para o vazio-pleno que seria a *morte* relativa. Para se atingir este estado de plenitude é preciso reviver todas as suas vivências anteriores, enfrentá-las – o que significa libertação. Aí ele atinge um estado de ética no mais alto sentido. Enquanto o vazio permanece desligado do outro lado (vida) é preciso debruçar-se sobre ele, como um abismo, e vivenciar nele o Nada, a Morte, a falta de significado. Todo homem sente este estado interior. O artista através da obra de arte mostra a ele esta *fatia da eternidade*. É uma mensagem profundamente religiosa no mais alto sentido ético, valorizando este sentido do vazio não-significativo. As formas assim como todas as coisas exprimem mais do que sua simples presença física (medida e peso). É como se cada coisa irradiasse uma energia conjugada com a energia do espaço vivo e real. Quando se coloca um objeto num espaço grande demais em relação a ele, o espaço não deixa de ser vazio e morto, mas quando este objeto encontra o seu espaço, então o espaço que o rodeia é pleno. Se o objeto é colocado perto demais de outros objetos, eu sinto duas forças contraditórias se batendo uma contra a outra. O homem tem essa irradiação maior que a de qualquer objeto e maior que a dos outros animais. É como se, por ser um vertical, ele se apoiasse na terra menos que os outros animais. Então a procura da sua transcendência vem em contraposição a essa polaridade (terra-espaço) com a teimosia e a intensidade de um ser privilegiado, terrivelmente angustiado, sendo jogado sempre para cima, preso pelos pés pelo lado orgânico da sua origem animal. No momento em que arrebatando o retângulo e invertendo virtualmente a superfície que, deixando de ser espessura do espaço passa a ser o fio desse espaço, então essa expressão já se dá dentro desse espaço real onde atuam todas as forças irradiadas, vivas e cosmológicas. A expressão é identificada imediatamente com essa irradiação orgânica-homem, dentro da mesma dinâmica real. (...) Enquanto a ciência conquista um lado, é essencial que o indivíduo conquiste esse seu tempo interior tomando consciência desse sentido ético-religioso para que ele não se perca e não se destrua.

THE MYTH OF THE ROCK-CAVE (Breen & Teeuwen, 2010, pp. 129-130)

"In Kojiki the tale runs as follows.

When Amaterasu was in the sacred weaving hall weaving divine garments, (Susanowo) made a hole in the roof and threw a heavenly piebald horse that he had flayed backwards into the hall. The heavenly weaving maiden was shaken, pierced her genitals with her weaving shuttle, and died.



Amaterasu was frightened by this sight, opened the Rock-cave of Heaven, and confined herself in it. The whole of the plain of High Heaven became dark, and all of the Central Land of Reed Plains was dark too. Because of this, eternal night reigned. The voices of the myriad kamis filled (the air) like summer flies, and a myriad evils arose.

Therefore, the eight hundred myriad kami gathered on the bank of the Peaceful River of Heaven in a divine gathering. Takamimusubi's son Omiokane was ordered to devise a plan. (...) They charged Ishikoridome with making a mirror and Tama-no-Ya with making five hundred (strings of) shining curved beads. (...) Ame-no-Uzume tied up her sleeves with heavenly hikage (...) By the heavenly Rock cave they overturned a tub, and she made it thunder by stamping on it. She became Kami-possessed, pulled out the nipples of her breasts and pushed her skirtstring down to her genitals. Then the Plain of High Heaven shook, and all the eight hundred myriad kami laughed together.

Amaterasu was startled, and slightly opening the door of the heavenly Rock-cave she asked from within: Because I have hidden myself, the Plain Heaven must be dark, and the central land of reed plains likewise. Why then is Ame-no-Uzume dancing, and why are all the eight hundred myriad kami laugh? Ame-no-Uzume replied, "We rejoice, laugh and dance because there is a kami superior to you." While she said this, Ame-no-Koyane and Futodama held up the mirror and showed it to Amaterasu. (Seeing her own reflection on the mirror) Amaterasu was even more startled. When she leaned out of the cave to look at it, Ame-no-Tajikarawo, who stood hidden, took her arm and drew her out. At the same time Futodama pulled a shirikume rope behind her and said, "You cannot cross this rope and go back inside." When Amaterasu appeared, the High Plain of Heaven and the Central Land of Reed Plains became light once more".